
THE WALKING DEAD!
OH NO!
Grrac
Ahh
And we've made official contact!
You just had to point at her!
This means filling out an encounter report!
We have to offer support services!
I lost my pen after the Carousel Bar!
This is a disaster!
Grah?



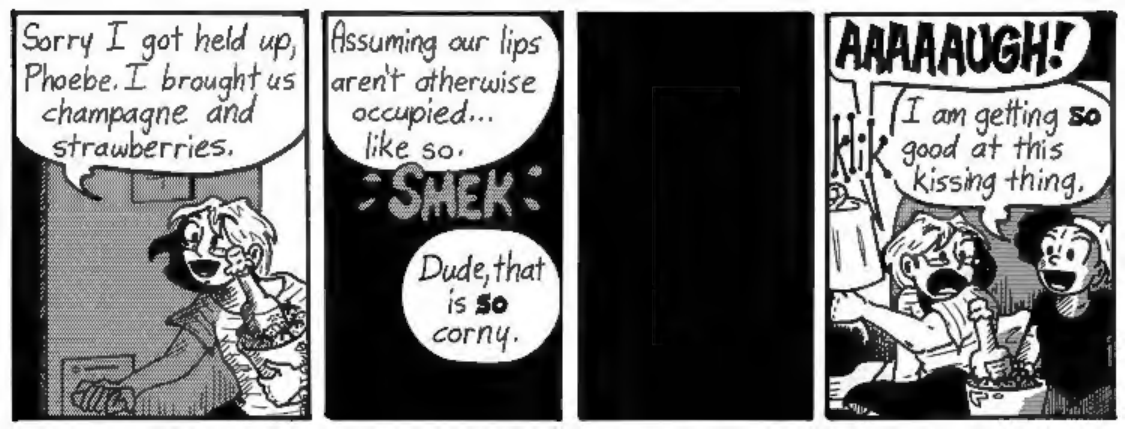
Stephen R. Abbott et Jeffrey C. Wells Presents Sky Horse
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federal-performance-initiatives-require-us-to-seek-a-formal-application-for-
...
-government-services-before-agency-staff-are-able-to-respond-to-any-
You could help, you know.
I am helping!

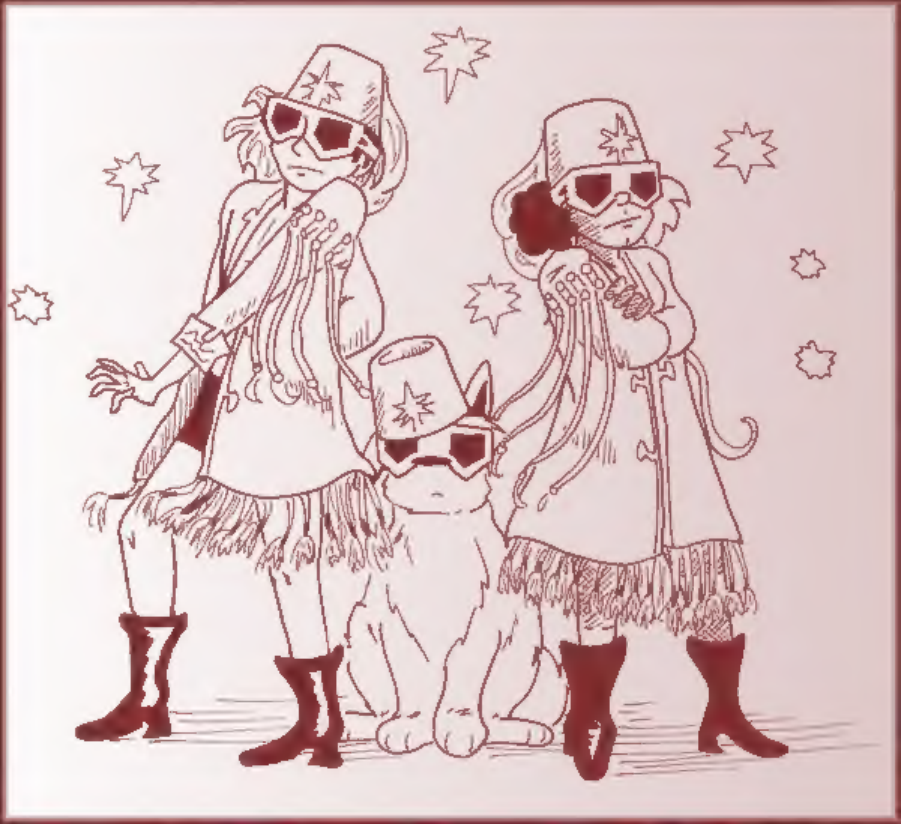

Ma'am, I wish we could dialogue out some other solution than...
gnar gnar
...my doing this to you.
FWMP
It will never not freak me out to see you do that.
I don't like being this person, Sweetheart.
What, someone competent and effective?
A man this pretty shouldn't have to be competent!


Graah!
SNAP
Er, ma'am ...
Hello?
HRRRRR
Tip, you beat up our client, causing her to run away before we could start paperwork.
I guess so.
You've revolutionized customer service.
Oh, no, I'm not doing that every time. Hell on the nails.


I don't get it. There are no registered zombie nests in this area.
Hm.
And that thing didn't smell right. It wasn't standard-grade undead.
Hey, I've got an idea!
How about you hit the hotel bar for an hour while I entertain Phoebe upstairs?
And just how does this help the mission?
Sorry, the what?


Sorry I got held up, Phoebe. I brought us champagne and strawberries.
Assuming our lips aren't otherwise occupied... like so.
:SMEK:
Dude, that is SO corny.
AAAAAUGH!
I am getting SO good at this kissing thing.


Okay, when I said, "Aaaaaugh," what I meant was—
Don't sweat it, Tip.
Since I'm a boy-kissing engine of destruction now, I figured you'd feel threatened.
Your territory is so safe. I will leave ladies and dudes uneaten and unkissed for you.
Yeah, I'm... pretty sure we're not in the same territory.
Glass is crunchy!
Tosh




Tip? That was fast-
We should get back to the zombie investigation. Now.
Oh- well- by all means-
Hey, babe!
Unity?
What were you doing up there?
Kissing!
Sounds like there's already been too much zombie investigation.
Can we get back to work?

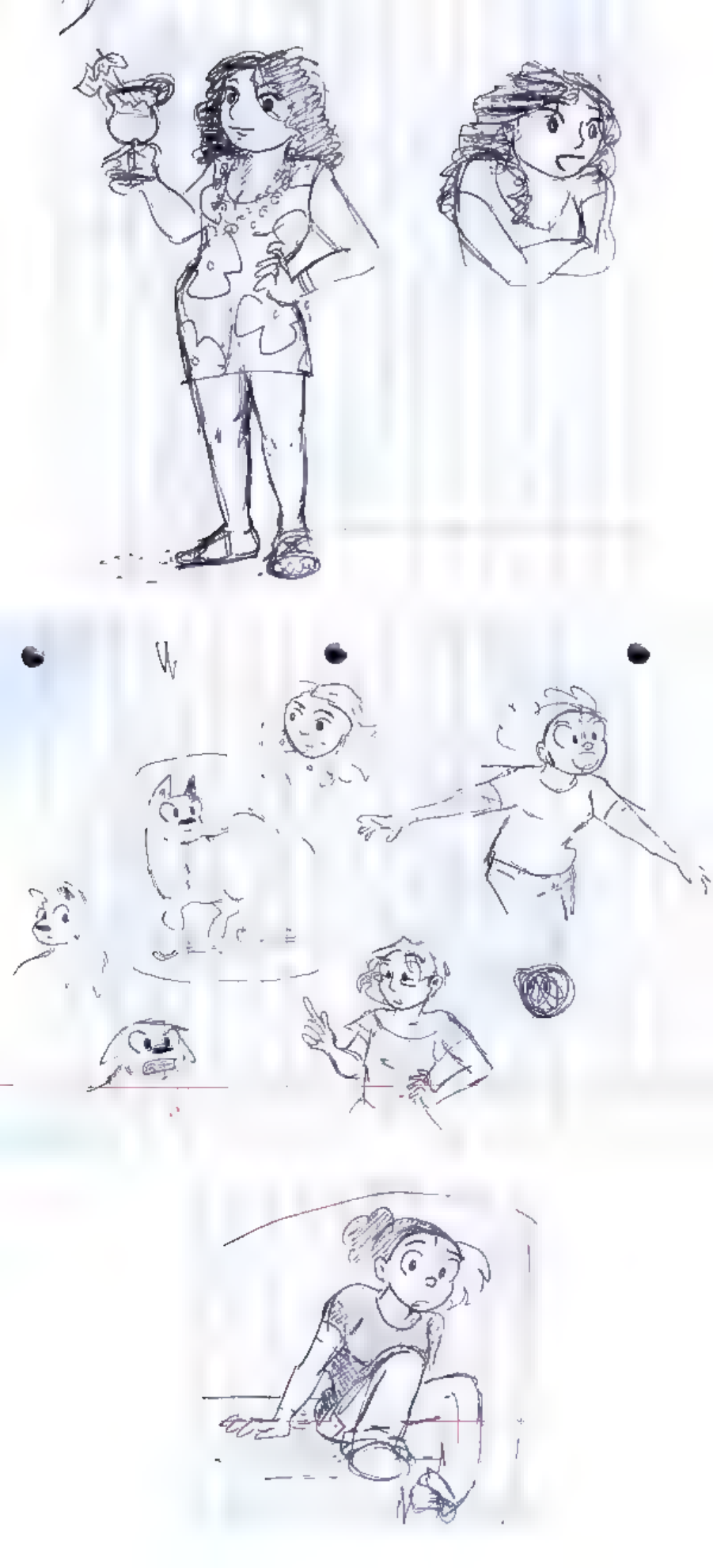

So you... r... kissed Tip.
Well, he kissed me. He's a kissy guy.
Okay, I'm staying calm... like Tip said...
'Course, I'd already kissed Remy, so no big.
Fine... great... not flipping out...
Also I ate the cookies I was saving for you.
Okay, that's it. The bitch is back.
I thought if I told you that first, you wouldn't get mad that I didn't serve those papers.


Personal shenanigans on hold. The three of us still have a mission to complete.
Those papers need to be served, and we still... don't... know...
Unity, what is this.
Brian! He's the kiss hand!
Okay, the four of us.
Watch out. He's a little pinchy.


The pieces don't fit! A human groom who's MIA, a nonhuman bride who doesn't recall getting married...
...and we just saw a zombie wandering around town.
Zombies.
Eh?
Look, there's a couple more over there.
Somebody's getting served tonight, darn it!
Omigosh, it's a horde! Brian, wave!


Unity! Heel!
But it's a norde! Brian wants to go lurch!
What's wrong?
You know. It's that zombie swarming instinct...
...which Unity will resist so she can focus on the mission.
It's not me! Talk to the hand!
You didn't just say that.
I... I have no words.
We're sorry.


Crud. Looks like a full necrotic outbreak.
Maybe this is normal for New Orleans.
Oh, come on.
Remy says they have magic and gods and a voodoo queen who ruled for 100 years!
Remy, Remy, Remy! Unity, there is no city where it's normal for corpses to walk the streets!
Well, on this Coast.
Right. California doesn't count.




Swamp.
Huh?
That's what bothers me about the zombies. They reek of swamp vegetation.
The Cypress?
But how? Why?
I don't know, but I know what's next for us.
Cookies and punching!
This is a red-letter day for you, isn't it?

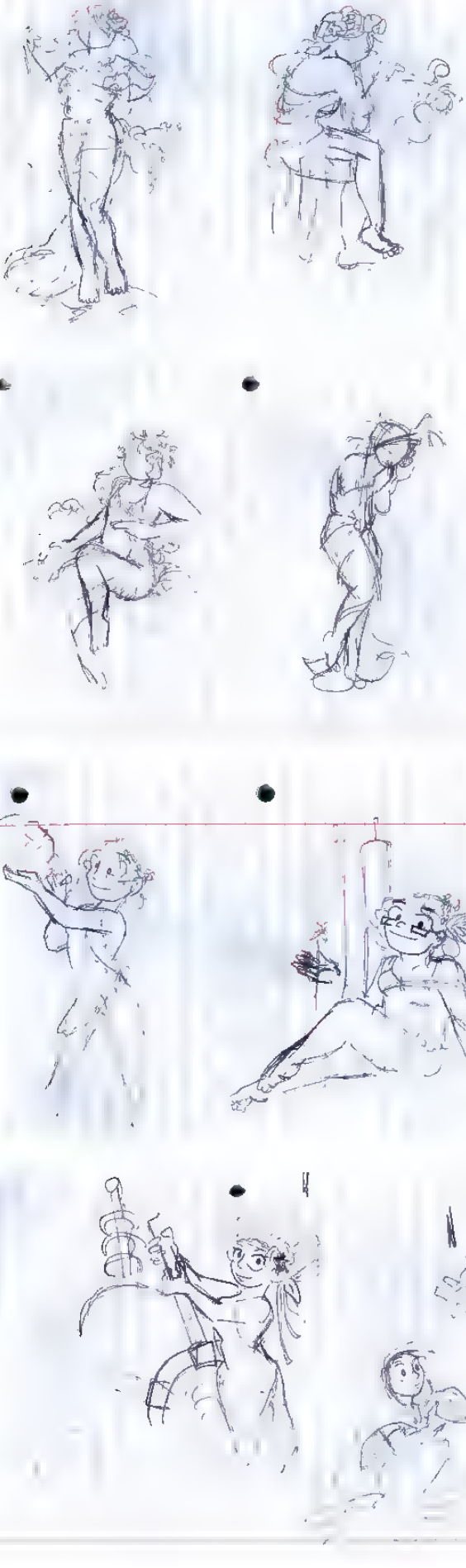

Awright! Unity smash!
Tip and I smash. You find that Remy person.
See if our voodoo mortician knows about the corpses gallivanting around.
But I wanna help!
Gathering intel is helping.
I wanna help with the part where I can beat people up.
You can thrash Remy a little.


I wanna do the swamp part!
No. This is going to take finesse.
I can do finesse!
No you can't! Remember the panda incident?
Which one?
You see? Most people don't even have a panda incident'
'Cause if you're talking the first one, we rebuilt the animal shelter.
And do I want to know where you got that hat?


Honestly, I thought you'd want to spend more time with Remy.
But-
That's an order, agent! And I want your cell phone on at all times!
I wanna be useful!
You're useful! Remember all that luggage of Tip's you carried?
Yeah... er... good first try on the compliments
Too soft? Too gushing?


Fraggin' buzzkill. Where's Sweetheart get off?
I've been trying real hard on this mission! And she still treats me like like
..like I don't pay attention to anything.
POW
Unity! Thanks for taking out those hostiles!
Those what?


Grace aux Invisibles.. you saved my life.
No prob. What's these guys' deal?
Don't know. They're not like you.
Yeah, they're like crazy violent brain-dead freaks.
Right. Let's cut one open and see what makes it tick.
SHOOK
You just like to dramatically open stuff.
Now for the shiny scalpels!
SNAP




I don't get it.
You see this sporiform infiltrate?
These bodies have swamp vegetation growing inside them.
No, I mean, why are we wearing goggles?
SPLORT
Oh yeah! Dead-guy juice!
That's actually the medical term for it, you know.


I think these corpses have been absorbed by a collective organism.
Wait, they're part of the Cypress?
poke poke
Yep. Just like the dead fox on your head was.
twitch
Hey!
gnar gnar gnar
Or, alternately, like the dead fox on your head is.
Bad hat! Them ain't eatin' brains!


SKREEE!
Hey! Get back here!
I killed you and put you on my head fair and square!
Uh-ty
Sorry, Remy, gotta go! My hat's gone on ahead!
I don't know what horrifies me more, the hat or the pun.
Brian made me say it!


Unity, think before you run off after your zombie hat!
Okay!
...And I want your cell phone on and something, la la, I'm a fuzzy puppy and I want scritches!
Oh yeah! Can you turn on my cell for me?
Brian, I feel like I'm missing something.
She's gonna be so proud!


And now, a public service announcement.
All right, hat. Let's do this.
rRRR
SKREEEAA
Yeah!
Remember: fur kills.
Thank you.


Stupid hat! Where are you going? The Cypress lives thataway!
What, you guys, too? You're going the wrong way!
I mean, geez, people, get some brains!
braaains...
braaains...
I know, right?
braaains...




You know what I think? I think we still don't know the story here.
I think maybe following this zombie horde will lead me to the truth.
I also think pepperoni is a vegetable and ice cream is good for computers.
Anyway, point is, I'm usually right. Swamp time!


Boy, won't Sweetheart feel dumb when I crack this case all by myself!
SPLSH
Or wait. Maybe it'll turn out crummy, and she'll be all, "Blah blah, told you so."
Eh, I'mo go for it. I mean, how bad could it—
Well, crud.
Finished with your flashback yet, chère?


Well, the Cypress is either innocent or a great liar.
And these cookies are delicious.
Sheesh, you sound like Unity
Well, why not take a cue from Unity?
SWEETHEART!
Thank goodness! Unity just ran after her hat, leaving me with her undead hand!
9
Oh, right. The wake of chaos.
And you must be the transvestite!

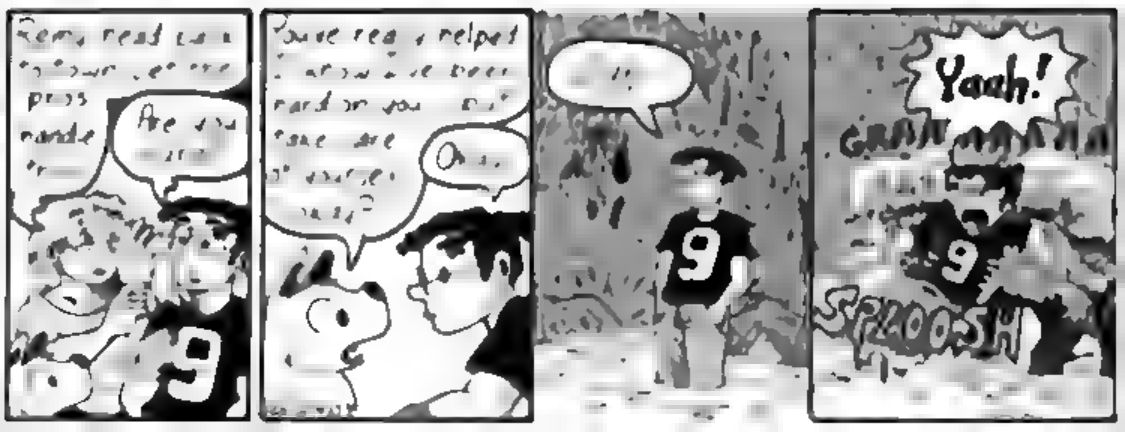

I don't like this. Call Unity's cell.
Yeah, about that—
SKREEEYAAA
What the hell was that?
Unity's phone. She left it with you, didn't she?
That's the worst ringtone I've ever heard
It gets annoying at the movies

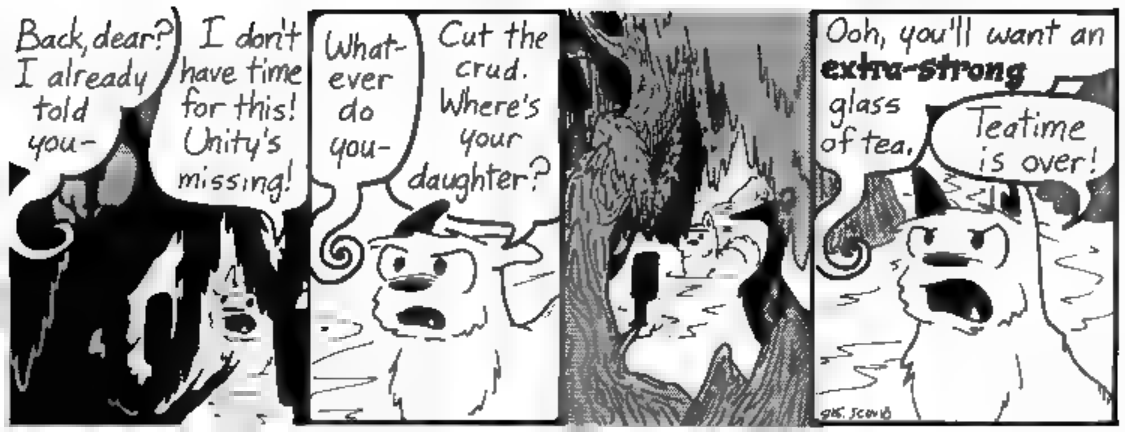

Unity isn't with the Cypress?
She isn't with you?
What would she be doing with me?
Gallivanting about? Taking in the thrills of the city?
Letting some smooth operator sweet-talk her into ditching her mission for a night of romance?
Yeah, the chicks go nuts for standing knee-deep in swamp water.
Told you!


Remy, you told Unity about a voodoo queen who ruled for 100 years.
Marie Laveau. The voodoo queen.
splsh
How'd she do that?
Oh... well... there were Two Marie Laveaus. A mother and daughter.
The daughter gradually took the mother's place as –
We have to find Unity!
For more about the New Orleans voodoo tradition, consult your library or my extensive edits on Wikiped–
LATER!

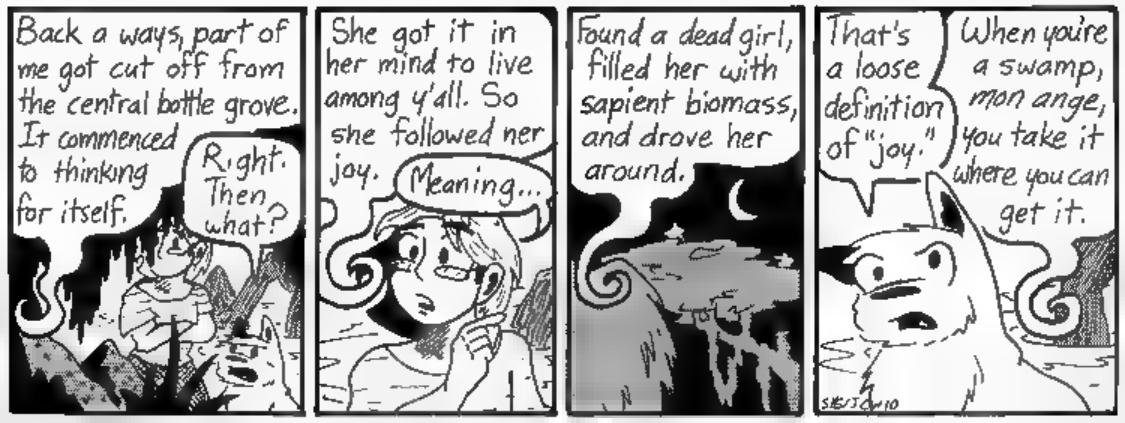



I can't believe I've been so stupid!
Wait!
Where're you going?
Back to the Cypress. Our informant was, of course, spectacularly unreliable.
Chuck the hand, move it. We're done stumbling around in the dark.
SPLSH
His name is Brian, actually.
Just hurry up!
SYS/TOWNS


Are you
Yaah!
SPLOOSH


Back, dear? I already told you-
I don't have time for this! Unity's missing!
What-ever do you-
Cut the crud. Where's your daughter?
Ooh, you'll want an extra-strong glass of tea.
Teatime is over!
GIBS. 2008


I finally placed your attitude, Ms. Cypress. You're the fretful mother of the bride...
...powerless to stop her daughter from royally fouling up.
And we're not talking "bad wedding cake."
Unless this cake has Zombie Apocalypse frosting.
"Zombie Apocalypse frosting"?
It's tough-guy banter! It works!


Back a ways, part of me got cut off from the central bottle grove. It commenced to thinking for itself.
Right. Then what?
She got it in her mind to live among y'all. So she followed ner joy.
Meaning...
Found a dead girl, filled her with sapient biomass, and drove her around.
That's a loose definition of "joy."
When you're a swamp, mon ange, you take it where you can get it.


That man Alphonse must've broke her heart.
Save the speculation. I need to find your daughter...
...because my partner wants to impress me by finding her first.
That don't sound so bad.
Look, Sweetheart! I dug up the gas main and lit it on fire just for you!
You don't know my partner.
Nice girl. Likes cookies.

BE
MINE


Truth be told, she hasn't spoke to me since the big storm.
Any info would help.
When y'all find her... you're not going to hurt her?
(Ma'am, we're just here to serve papers.
And save the city from zombies, I hope.
Yes, yes, when our real job's done.
Some of us have unique priorities.
Some of us are asking to get bitten.


The bayou east of the city.
Look there.
Right. C'mon, Tip.
Don't let her provoke a fight. It ain't the Old War no more.
Wait, what?
Now!
Our receptionist mentioned the Old War What is it?
Ah, that is another story and shall be told another time.
Like when I'm not attached to a dog.
Might be wise.
grr grr grr


Ugh, my head...
Be grateful it's still attached, beb.
Er.. Cypress?
Close, cher. I'm her human-hating offspring.
Pleased to... meet you?
Save it for someone who trusts those pretty eyes, mon coeur.
If you hate me, what's with all the Cajun endearments?
It's a Southern thing and you know it.


Let's make this clear. You're alive for one reason.
Hanging from that tree is my true love.
I've kept him perfectly preserved, waiting for someone like you to come along.
And by "come along," you mean "get dragged here and cold-cocked by zombies."
You really want to split hairs with me, bebette?


You hate humans, but you loved Alphonse?
I hate humans for what happened to Alphonse.
What did happen to him?
Surely you humans haven't forgotten the hurricane?
Katrina? If you're blaming humans for-
Not the storm. The flood that took him.
Zombie vengeance. Thanks, Army Corps of Engineers.
Let me demonstrate land subsidence with these caterpillars...

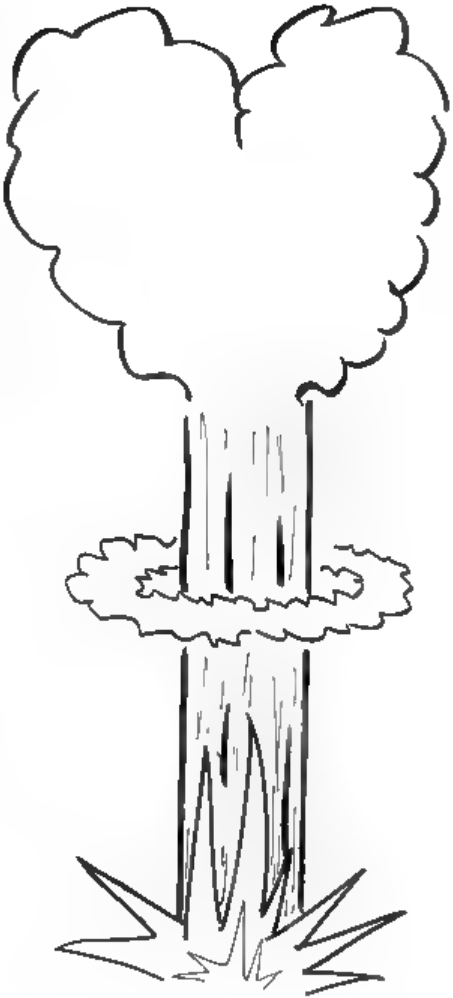

You see? My charts prove the rightness of my homicidal grudge.
Very informative.
I pride myself on my scientific rigar.
So Alphonse died during Katrina. Why am I here?
To fish the soul of my beloved out of the dark waters of death, hoodoo man.
Ah... yes... well...
Don't take that tone! I did math!












Religion is, er, full of metaphors ...
You can't do this? You studied under Dr. Goodness!
When we talk about "connecting with the dead," we often mean-
Let's make this simple, Mr. Sage-Marron.
Can you, or can you not, bring back the dead?
Yes, but I get all titchy about it.
You prefer "titchy" or "d.smembered"?


You don't understand! Recalling the gros-banange is dangerous petro magic.
What I call back may not even be your husband anymore.
Do it or I'll rip you to shreds.
Death is one thing I'm not scared of.
Then I'll destroy the city and your new girlfriend.
Huh? You mean Unity?
Funny name for a girl torn into fourteen pieces, no?


I have my doubts that it's possible, but if you've hurt Unity-
She's alive. Barely. Do your job.
...All right, but it's on your head. Or whatever you have.
Better.
And now I must prepare for a **different** kind of battle...
So, what, the red scarf for this leg of the mission?
DAMMIT TIP I'M COLOR-BLIND.


It's no use. This swamp goes on for acres.
Maybe we could use... a hand!
Don't start with me.
No, really. Maybe it can sense where the rest of Unity is.
That's... actually a pretty smart idea.
What's that, boy? She's over there?
Right behind the army of zombies?
This idea is back to being stupid.
GRAAAH


There's about a thousand zombies swarming the Ninth Ward ruins.
Looks like.
I was worried about what Unity would do, but now I'm worried **for** her.
Mm-hm.
Tip, this is a crisis! Do you have **anything** to bring to the conversation?
About a thousand rounds of ammo.
Seriously, where do you hide those things?


On top of everything, this is a PR disaster. The mundane authorities will notice this mess.
Graaah.
But that means we could stand down and let the National Guard handle it.
I thought we came here for Unity.
Does that mean we have to be stupid?
We're stupid anyway, Sweetheart.
Yeah, you're right. Let's go in.


DIRK
JIEDE
02 20 2011


You. Status report.
M. Alphonse seems... reluctant to return.
I can animate the body! You just need to find him!
Well, I can't hurry it! Why the rush?
Something silly this way comes.
Pardon?
YEE-HAW!


There's too many of them!
In here!
BAM
Great. Trapped in a house, surrounded by zombies.
It's like the "Thriller" video.
Hey, yeah!
Ooh, and remember? When it's over, he turns around, and-
EVIL CAT EYES!
*Am I in charge now?


SLAM!
Any more or ght deas?
Sorry, fresh out.
AAARH
Well, g'bye, Tip.
Goodbye, Sweetheart.
FREEEEOO
rrrrrrrrrrrp
Aaand hello giant flying buzzsaw.
Hey, nickel-pickers.


That's right! Who's laughing now?
Nick, what the hell?
Ram it. I'm hecks of doing "Evil Dead" here.
What is that... thing you're wearing?
Aerial tree-trimming apparatus. For trimming trees. Know what else it is?
What?
Groovy.
Oh, let him go. We were doing Michael Jackson videos.


So I sees this giant undead missel thrush, and I says, giant missel thrush = some retarded Wilkin thing.
And oh look, I was right. So I did some repurposing of my arborist tools re: zombie buzzsawing.
You saved us with your huge...
...dangling...
...thing.
That's what she-
Oh, grow up, Wilkin.


Okay, we can feel dirty later. Let us board, Nick.
Yeah, let's get outta this tiny France and back to civilization.
Not yet. Unity's still out there.
Cheesy taters, I gotta pull more crocuses outta the fre?
I want a raise every time I do the Big Tang Heroes bit.
Civil service No merit increases.
Why do I work for you people again?
Because your heart is strong and full of love. Let's fly.


Hat!


I'm sorry it's not working. Your husband really doesn't want to come back
Impossible he loved me
I can only tell you what I hear
Then you're hearing wrong
We were going to be together forever! Why won't he come back to me?
Maybe he changed his mind about psychotic wierdabes
LESS TALK. MORE RESURRECTION.


Bah! Useless! Like the rest of your kind!
Urk!
I'm going to offer your girl one last chance to join me.
Are you trying to sound like Darth Vader?
I've given her just enough time to reach the only rational response..
Well, this bites
Now that I have your attention, sugar.


Brian says we're closing in.
Heat sigs confirm.
Okay, Nick. Set us down.
Whoa there, fleas. You ain't that close.
Just keep those zombies off our tails.
All right, team. Let's go get civil.
Wait, that's your hero quip? Seriously?
We need to vet these in advance.
Shut up and jump in the swamp.


I've been studying this not-blood you've got dripping out of you.
Millions of tiny moving parts. You're a collective organism yourself, aren't you?
We're the same thing, honey. Don't you think we should work together?
Well? Don't you?
You know what'd be awesome? Dokken.
I trust you're giving my words silent consideration...


UNITY!!
Oh no
BASH
Erf!
Took you long enough. I thought you'd miss your little rag doll.
Gloat on your own time! If you've hurt Unity
You mean aside from the dismemberment?
Bare
Admittedly, she doesn't look much worse than the time we tried racquetball.
Whose side are you on?


All right, sugars, heres how it's gonna go. One, I kill you dead.
Two, I infest your corpses with my glorious self.
Three, you and every other dead thing in the parish storm the Big Easy for me.
Okay, but the wait at the muffaletta place is going to be hell.
For revenge! Not snacks!

DON'T take life so serious, son.



It ain't *nohow* permanent.


If you're going to kill us, you might as well know your revenge means nothing.
You blame humans for separating you from your husband, right? But he was leaving you anyway.
What are you talking about?
In 2005, Alphonse filed for divorce. You were never going to be together forever.
2005, and this is the first I've heard of it?
Civil service, okay?


"Fits of rage"?
"Fear for my life"?
"Algae"?
That's what he wrote.
No! I don't believe you!
And who would you believe, Venus?
I gotta come all the way back from the dead to convince you?
SPLOOSH!
Alphonse?
Remy?
Both! Ain't possession a blast?


Hey, I make a pretty handsome corpse.
I kept it perfect for you, cher.
But if you'd rather be in the hoodoo man..
I can't stay, Venus. I came back to tell you something.
A message so important, I had to pierce the very veil of death.
What... what is it?
Quit it.
WAP
Ow!


Bondye forgive me for striking a woman.
...That's it? "Quit it"?
What about revenge? What about the city that killed you?
All well behind me, Venus. You'd best put it behind you.
What am I gonna do with this undead army I made?
Show choir?
This is not how I wanted my zombie nightmare to go.
Praise heaven for small favors.


Oh, Alphonse, was I so awful?
Not at first, no.
Things slid downhill around when I found out you were a corpse filled with swamp water.
Is that one of those things I should've brought up before the wedding night?
Mighta been nice.
You still angry?
Now that we're both corpses, nah.


Before you go, Apronse. hold me. Like it was the good old days
A' right venus Just smile
We should've done this years from day one
Later under the pneumatic phones I guess
SNIFF
You this is a zombie swamp possessed voodoo priest romance for the ages!
You shut your mouth for a day


It's so moving, I almost forgot she was planning to kill us.
Un'ty, Where's Unity?
She was in that pile of corpses a second ago...
Venus! Give her back!
SPLSH
I don't think Venus has her. She seems... distracted.
What's more important than finding my partner?
SVG/Rumble
Figuring out how to French-kiss a man with a liana, apparently.
Yeah, okay, looking elsewhere now.


Oog... thought that'd be easier...
Eh?
GRAB
SNAP
Heya, Venus. I'm here to serve papers.


Unity! You're okay!
Sure, babe. Long's I got one arm left, I can stitch myself up.
SPLASH
And boy, did I luck out! That corpse hanging from the tree was in perfect shape!
RUM
Er... wasn't that a male corpse?
Yeah, maybe. Didn't check
You live with her, you learn not to ask.
If I start thinking too hard about it, rum will save me!


Okay, bog who doesn't give me cookies.
Ready to sign the divorce papers?
I... I'm so sorry... about everything.
Once this is done, I'm going back to Mother. Merge back into the collective.
Hey, you don't hafta erase yourself.
That's right. In spite of everything, we do feel your pain.
Most of us.
I finished my job oh boy oh boy oh boy
wag wag


...so Venus backed down peacefully. I've gotta hand it to you, Remy, pretending to be her ex was a stroke of genius.
I mean... that **was** an act, right? That... there's no way that was real.
I've found that "real" and "unreal" are slippery categories.
Come on! Don't you **dare** try to tell me you were possessed by a ghost!
No, I'd never say anything so absurd to a talking dog.
Pass me that rum.


Man, actually completing a mission takes forever.
So, er, you'll be leaving, huh?
There's always more papers to serve.
Then this is goodbye. You guys're shadow agents, after all.
What could an ordinary mortician contribute to your cause?
Employee discounts.
Ooh, Brian and I just got in a choice selection of elbows...




Um... hey, Sweetheart ...
Unity?
You did good.
I guess I can get soppy once in a while.
Ohhhh I got a best friend, I got booze, I got positive performance reviews...

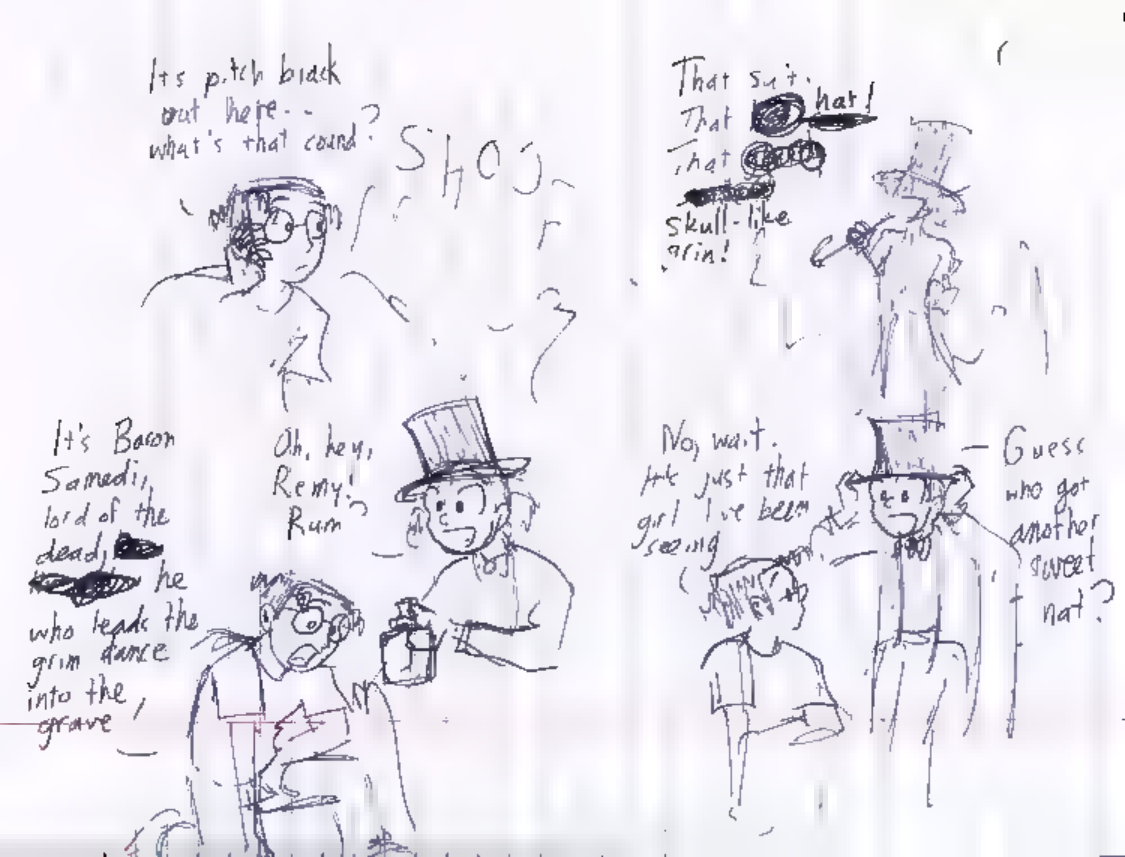

Mornin', Nick.
Spuds! Where ya been?
SKG/Tcull
Out onna town. No. First. First. We served th' friggin' papers'n saved th' friggin' day.
Then Tip was all, was all HEY, less celebrate! So we ALLL went downta Bourbon fer a coupla. Things. Big tall glasses.
Yeah, that was two weeks ago.
When Tip says celebrate, he means celebrate.
This ain't the torso I fell asleep in.


Well! Looking over the reports, I see th.s mission could have gone rather more smoothly.
I have here a special addendum and request by two agents who shall remain anonymous...
...To wit, that "Agent Wilkin never again be sent anywhere that could be described as a party town."
BUT TOWN IM IN IS A PARTY TOWN!
My idea was to chan him here in Annex One.
I WILL TURN ANNEX ONE INTO A TOP-SECRET FEDERAL PARTY FACILITY!


Before we left, ma'am, you said this was a "Pavane."
I don't recall any such thing.
You guessed the Cypress had split in two, didn't you? And it reminded you of something.
Pavane is another hive. Your daughter.
Clever girl.
Well?
Care for some cookies?
COOKIES?


That's right, I'm quitting. I've had enough.
You realize Anasigma isn't pleased with this.
Let them extirpate me. At least I sabotaged this mission.
You what? No, Phoebe, we got the intel we needed.
But I didn't plant any bugs in that hotel room!
Yes, so we used the bugs we had planted in you.
I should've wondered why my underarms kept beeping.
Never use aerosol deodorant. Packed with nanites.


I have to say, when A-Sig came to terminate me, I thought I'd rate more than a fellow agent.
You expected Mr. Green?
Well, no, but—
We're preparing for war. Neutralizing the swamp creature is just one front.
I told you, the Cypress is harmless!
Yes, the zombie-raising vegetable intelligence that can grow vaster than empires very quickly. Harmless.
But now we have its location. Job well done, Phoebe.

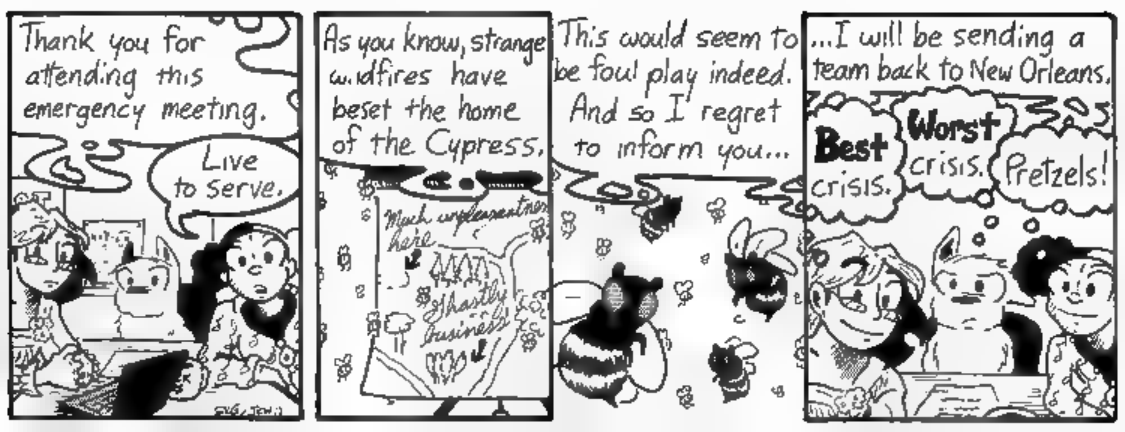

It's pitch black out here... what's that sound?
SHOO-
It's Baron Samedi, lord of the dead, he who leads the grim dance into the grave.
Oh, hey, Remy! Rum
That suit. That hat! That skull-like grin!
No, wait. It's just that girl I've been seeing
Guess who got another sweet hat?


"Deep in the royal boudoir, Ambyrr stroked the gnarled thews of the Goblin Prince."
"Kheen shied from her touch. 'No, my lady,' he cried. 'How could you love one so monstrously strange as I?'"
"Because you're super hot,' said Ambyrr."
"Then they had totally hot sex."
This is an **excellent** volume.


Hey, Tip. What's up?
Are you watching the news?
No, we're reading the dirty b.ts from-
Turn it on, Unity.
Okay, ok- Oh, whoa.
Oh my God!
I know! It's horrific!
Justin Bieber changed his hair!
Okay, that's the wrong station.


I'm running out of news channels, Tip!
This always works in the movies.
klik klik
...Wait. That's the Cypress's swamp!
BREAKING NEW WILDF RES
"Bog wildf.res consume the Lafitte Preserve."
Awfully suspicious timing, isn't it?
"Bog... wild-fires"?
Yeah, that's the other suspicious part.


You think someone's taking revenge for the zombie attack?
Maybe, but this isn't just in Venus's grove.
It looks like Mother Cypress is in flames.
Cripes, will she be okay?
I don't know. Collective entities are hard to hurt.
Darn, arm fell off again.
Unless you let them try to do laundry.
Oh! Tell Tip hi for us!


Thank you for attending this emergency meeting.
Live to serve.
As you know, strange wildfires have beset the home of the Cypress.
Much unpleasantness here.
Ghastly business!
This would seem to be foul play indeed. And so I regret to inform you...
...I will be sending a team back to New Orleans.
Best crisis.
Worst crisis.
Pretzels!


How soon can we head out?
Our dear Unity and Nicholas will be leaving immediately.
I wish to keep this rather hush-hush, as it were. Two agents will suffice.
...Oh.
You two, meanwhile, will travel to Cleveland.
CLEVELAND!
BOING
Er...
I know, I know, but do try to contain your excitement.
Best crisis!
wag wag wag


WHAT GIVES, GUYS? I THOUGHT WE WERE ALL GOING TO GET GENDER-FLIPPED FOR THE "RULE 63" FAN ART
WE DID! CAN'T YOU TELL?
IF I'M A WOMAN NOW, DOES THAT MEAN I HAVE TO START WEARING MEN'S THINGS?

Project: Skin Horse
Agents' Guide
to Cleveland, Ohio



Greetings, Skin Horse agents. I'm Sergeant Willoughby of the National Guard.



Although you first met me in Paradise, Alaska (see volume two of the Skin Horse training manual), I spent my formative years in the Cleveland area.



Pay attention to the following informational video, since it just may save your life. And count toward my community service.

Guest Week by Andrew Farago



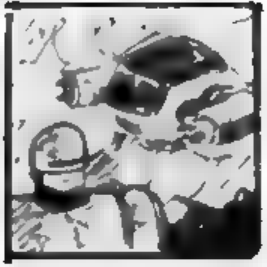
No trip to Cleveland is complete without a visit to the I.M. Pei-designed Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.



Well, kind of. "Why does Cleveland have the Rock Hall," you might ask? DJ Alan Freed popularised the term "rock and roll" here, for one thing. Kind of.



Actually, apart from seeing some awesome concerts in Cleveland, I'm still not sure why we got it.



It probably had something to do with the killer robot infestation that hit Detroit in the 1990s.

Guest Week by Andrew Farago



In a survival situation, it's important to know what kind of foods will be available to sustain you.



Like these. Pierogies are plentiful in Cleveland, and are stuffed with a variety of life-preserving necessities, such as ground meat or sauerkraut.



If you're stationed here in the late spring or summer, attend at least one of the forty or fifty rib cook-offs taking place in and around The Flats.



And an absolute must is the hot dog with Stadium Mustard. Accept no substitutes, even if the alternative is death.

Guest Week by Andrew Farago



To pass amongst the Clevelanders unnoticed, you need to understand their culture. Ninety percent of this involves the local sports teams.



Like the Cleveland Indians, who haven't won the World Series since 1948, although they came close in 1995 and 1997. Complain about the pitching and losing free agents to richer teams.



Or the Browns, who haven't won a championship since before the Super Bowl was invented. Speak disparagingly of Art Modell, John Elway, and the Pittsburgh Steelers, and you'll be embraced as a native in no time.



As for the Cavs, just don't bring them up at all. If the subject comes up, move on as soon as possible, at least for another two or three years.

Guest Week by Andrew Farago



Know your Cleveland folk heroes! If you mention Drew Carey, focus on his sitcom days, not his Price Is Right gig. But knowledge of Buzz Beer and DrugCo will only get you so far.



Real Clevelanders still speak fondly of Bernie Kosar, the last Cleveland quarterback with any staying power.



Of course, there's no one with the staying power of Dick Goddard, who's been using woolybear caterpillars to accurately predict Cleveland weather patterns for the past 15 years.



To really prove your "street cred," you'll want to namedrop Big Chuck and Little John, Ghoulardi, or, if you must, Superhost. Bonus points if you mention John Lanigan or "The WUAB-43 Prize Movie."

Guest Week by Andrew Farago



Other local legends include Howard the Duck, a longtime Cleveland resident, and rumored guest at this year's Transgenic Conference in Cleveland. DON'T MENTION THE MOVIE.



Superman was created right here in Cleveland by local kids Jerry Shuster and Joe Siegel. He moved to Metropolis right away, though, so most Clevelanders see him as being kind of stuck up. DON'T MENTION THE MOST RECENT MOVIES.



Harvey Pekar, however, stuck by his hometown, no matter what. If you really want to get to the heart of Cleveland, read through as many volumes of AMERICAN SPLENDOR as you can get. The movie's actually pretty good, too.



And Agent Wilkin, if you're watching this, remember to --

kkkkkkkkkkkk— and to stay away fr** ..... because it might prove fatal. Sergeant Willoughby, over and out.

Guest Week by Andrew Farago




You two will attend the annual meeting of the Transgenic Anti-Defamation League.
Oh, right. I just RSVP'd for that.
The Cypress is rather known in those circles. There will be no little comment on the incident.
Observe the event. Tell me all.
Do we get free time to spend in Cleveland?
Seriously, what's up with her?
Babe digs Cleveland.
Ooh, let's see the "Christmas Story" house!


Nick, take care of Unity. That city's dangerous.
It's the bayou that nearly killed you meatbags. And, um...
...we're kinda on S&R for the thing that made it dangerous, y'know?
I know. I nearly lost her last time.
I...I can't let that happen again. She's my best, truest friend in all the world.
Dick Tracy, I wish I had a mouth so I could barf.
Plus she can work a can opener.

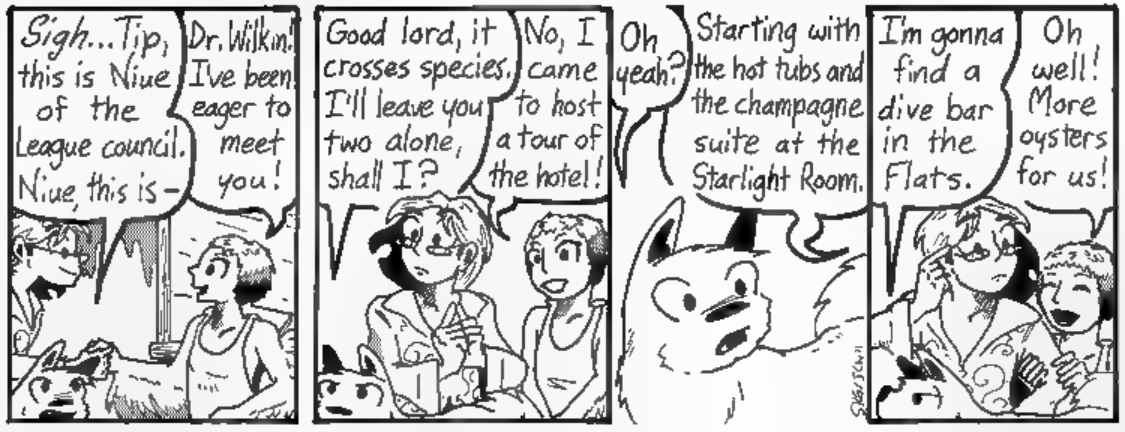

Change your socks and do less than a mi. in property damage!
Roger, babe!
Sayonara, elf-wranglers!
And please call...
Holy geez, I hope going to Cleveland is enough to lift our spirits.
Er. . yeah.
I mean, at least it's not New Orleans, right?
:Sob:


Ah, Cleveland!
This is worse than I expected.
On the phone, the Transgenic League liaison had high praise for this hotel.
Smells fine to me.
Are you noticing the enormous cockroach?
Hi! I'm the Transgenic League liaison!
This may be a long weekend.


Welcome, federal agents! Mr. and Mrs. Opossum will show you the room!
Hello!
We can direct you around the hotel and answer any questions about the event schedule.
Thank you!
We can also "play dead," and our secretions have medicinal properties!
Um.. less likely, to need that, thanks.
And we have bifurcate genitalia!
What's the tipping protocol for all this?


Right this way...
Go ahead, say it.
What?
When we deal with furry, cuddly-type sapients, you want to make some comment.
Sweetheart! That would be speciesist and impolitic!
Just let it out. You'll feel better.
...
Oh, do join us for Turkish Delight with Mr. Tumnus!
Do!
There you go.


Word of warning, Tip. Around here you can't judge by appearances.
I know. I work in nonhuman relations.
I'm serious! There are real hard-liners here! Your usual human tactics won't work on—
Agent Fancy! Agent Wilkin!
I've been asked to greet you on behalf of the League.
Oh, who am I kidding?
Ooh! Chiffon!


Sigh... Tip, this is Niue of the League council. Niue, this is -
Dr. Wilkin! I've been eager to meet you!
Good lord, it crosses species. I'll leave you two alone, shall I?
No, I came to host a tour of the hotel!
Oh yeah?
Starting with the hot tubs and the champagne suite at the Starlight Room.
I'm gonna find a dive bar in the Flats.
Oh well! More oysters for us!


So, er, you're trans-genic?
Avian-derived. I'm part macaw.
BOOMS
Sorry, you just look so-
Human? Some of us can blend into society. My colleague, Mr. Squeakers, owns a Subway franchise.
Hello, Mr. Squeakers.
@>-,-< ignore 5:00 council mtg. @ yr peril
Don't ask a lot of questions, do they?
Oh, they're happy with anyone polite.


I should warn you, there's some anti-human sentiment this year.
Yes, we were briefed.
I appreciate the warning, but I'm prepared to handle hostile transgenics.
HEY!
DOOOOOC!
WHAM
The friendly ones, on the other hand, may kill me.
Haveya read my webcomic?


Ed's one of our guest speakers this weekend.
I owe it all to the Doc here.
That zoo intervention turned my life around.
Glad to hear it.
puf puf
That's our goal - to mainstream our clients into -
And that's why I'm pulling in six figures as an online cartoonist!
Wait. Which six figures?
Not sure. I've got people on the "money" thing.


I enjoy your comic, Leo, but... it makes money?
Sure, since the new artist came on board!
New artist?
Yeah, like a year ago...
Oh, right!
You've never read my comic, have you?
I go to Elle.com and it's the whole night!
Right there is the only realistic part of this scenario.
Someday money will happen!



WOLFCOPTER

AsLAN



Guest art by Dirk Tiede (www.paradigmshiftmanga.com)


Didn't this used to be two lions talking about Nintendo?
Now it has a plot!
That lion just ate that one's cubs!
Aw, its all fictionalized, like the sinister human conspiracy stuff.
EEE!
-ts him
Sinister what now?
Sorry, Doc! Fans! Talk later!
SQUEEEE
Wish I had a webcomic.
Take deep breaths. The feeling passes.


So where's a good restaurant for a woman on a macaw diet?
Oh, I don't eat like a bird!
Despite my genetic profile, you'll find me human in every important respect.
All right, then! What say we—
AAAH!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT? A HAT?
I HATE YOU!!!
I know Donna Karan hasn't been the same since '01—
DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE


I'll take the hat off! Look!
IT'S TOO LATE!!! I HATE YOU FOREVER!!!
All that stuff they say about you people is true!
Huh? What stuff?
I wouldn't expect a hat monster to understand! Good day, Doctor!
Man, am I striking out with the nonhuman community today.
Check it, dogg. A hat monster.


Well, hey there.
Lookit, Nut-up. A homo.
I sees him, Fast N Sciurus. Homo sapien. Hyoomn.
Look, I don't want to scare you, but I'm a federal agent—
Look like he wanna dance.
Bitchin'
Okay, let's calm dooooooowwww
JUMP
Oh look! Wee little gang signs on the walls!
You shut it less you wanna waltz again, long pig.


John! William! What are you doing?
None of your business, passer.
You sucked less when you was shorter.
I imagine so. Will you kindly leave the human alone?
Aw...
Nuts to this. I'm going out for a beer.
Sorry about that. Lack of appropriate social outlets, you know. And you are....?
Tip Wilkin. My hair usually looks better than this.
Arthur. Arthur Narbon.




A run-down bar in a blighted neighborhood. This is more like it!
Bartender! One beer, please!
Sorry, we don't serve dogs here.
. . .
Just because a dog walks into your bar doesn't make it a joke.
Wait'll you hear the punchline.


Crud, I thought this was a transgenic-friendly bar.
We've been getting you freaks in all day.
Argh... with all the rats and bugs and so on, I figured you served nonhumans.
I guess it's just a really filthy bar.
Hey, did I ask you to come in?
Slow service, too.
You know, I noticed that.
OUT!!!


C'mon, pour the lady a beer. On me.
Yah!
Who are you and how'd you sneak up on me?
A) I'm a cat, and B) I'm a cat.
Now, any particular reason we're waiting on that beer?
On it.
Somebody's pushy and demanding.
C) I'm a cat, and D)... yeah, ditto. Any more questions?


So, you in town for the convention?
My dear, I am the convention.
Name's H.T. Artist and co-writer of the comic "AsLAN."
Hey, that's Leo's thing!
Ah, you've met the brains. He asked me to tag along.
So I figure hey, any excuse to visit Cleveland!
I know! I think I'm gonna retire here!


What a night! Murky weather, Pabst Blue Ribbon...
Say, let's date.
Wait, what?
You. Me. Dinner tomorrow. You game?
Don't take this wrong, but I've never gone out with a cat...
Don't worry. You'll like it.
You clearly appreciate the finer things in life.
Look, H.T.! The river's on fire!


So...I guess I'll see you tomorrow.
I'll be there with bells on.
Well, this is all kind of... sudden.
wag wag
Ay, Tip's gonna have a field day. Me going squishy over a cat?
Don't blink. It may vanish.
Hello? Earth to attractive blond in drag?

Book I in the
Hot Goblin Brotherhood™
Saga

Love in the Time of Goblins



They are **so** gonna have hot goblin sex.

Book III in the
Hot Goblin Brotherhood™
Saga

Like Water for Goblins



This time they're gonna bang.

Book XIII in the
Hot Goblin Brotherhood™
Saga

Moonlust



Is there anything about penis bones?

Book XIV in the
Hot Goblin Brotherhood™
Saga

Blood Makeouts



And then they had totally hot sex.

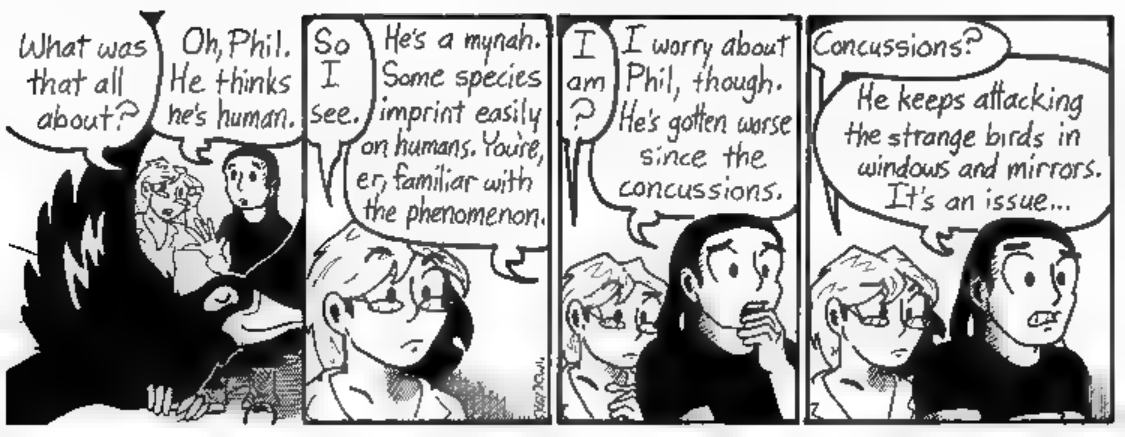

What were you thinking? The current polit.cal climate is not conducive to humans wandering around here like they own the place!
Are you listening? You could've been hurt! Those squirrels were out for blood!
Sigh... sorry, sorry. Obviously you're shell-shocked. And that's not meant as a pun. And if it is, it's a very bad one.
It's not that. I've just never met a man who was better-looking than me.
Yes, boggles the mind, doesn't it?


Sorry, I'm not usually like this. I guess it's a relief to see another human being.
Oh?
Don't get me wrong, some of my best friends are nonhuman. All of them, really... it's just, y'know... being in a crowd of... but you'd know and...
... and you're not human, are you?
Nope.
And now you think I'm a big old speciesist.
But, as you said, a good-looking one.


Please, I've heard it all before. Call me Artie.
Tip—
Wait. The Artie who used to run the League?
Oh, I wouldn't say that, but I **was** a founding chair.
Argh... I acted like a speciesist to a leader of the transgenic rights movement.
And you're Dr. Wilkin, yes? From Skin Horse?
Acted like a speciesist to a transgenic leader **on behalf of the U.S. government.**
Not my day.
Cheer up. Your hair's not that bad.


I don't mean to pry, but I have to ask—
fwp!
"Yes, I currently look human. It's strictly so I don't lose my keys. I am a rodent-derived transgenic created by a mad scientist hopped up on pink wine and Pixy Stix."
Okay, you did **not** know what I was going to ask—
Other side.
"I also have a biochemically-enhanced posthuman intellect. Of course I did."
Sorry. Saves time at these big events.


Again, I'm sorry. We got off on the wrong foot back there—
Artie!
Hi, Phil!
Am I glad to see you! You know me, I dig the beast-men, but I gotta kick back with fellow homo sapiens!
I know you're not really one of us, Art, but I think of you as an honorary human. You know that, right?
Um.
Like I said, I've heard it all before.
So you got plans for dinner, miss?


What was that all about?
Oh, Phil. He thinks he's human.
So I see.
He's a mynah. Some species imprint easily on humans. You're, er, familiar with the phenomenon.
I am?
I worry about Phil, though. He's gotten worse since the concussions.
Concussions?
He keeps attacking the strange birds in windows and mirrors. It's an issue...



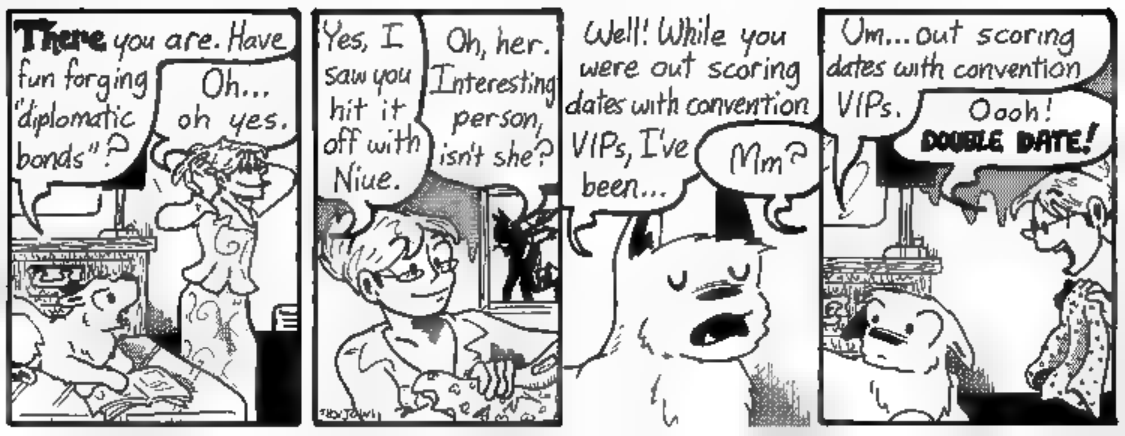






Anasigma n'existe pas


The federal government always sends an agent to this event...
...and after the Cypress incident it was thought wiser to send two.
Er, right.
Yes, we should talk, but I need to prep for tonight's council meeting.
Tell you what. I'll give you my number and we'll get drinks later.
OH GOD YES.
That... sorta slipped out.
Here's a pen. Do you have paper or underwear or whatnot?


There you are. Have fun forging "diplomatic bonds"?
Oh... oh yes.
Yes, I saw you hit it off with Niue.
Oh, her. Interesting person, isn't she?
Well! While you were out scoring dates with convention VIPs, I've been...
Mm?
Um... out scoring dates with convention VIPs.
Oooh! DOUBLE DATE!


Look, Niue's nice, if unstable, but I don't think—
I'm not going out with Niue. Irreconcilable hat differences.
Hat differences?!
No, I met someone else. I'm sure you'll like him.
Him ?!?
I've seen his name on staff reports, but I thought he was some kind of small busybody rodent...
YOU'RE GOING OUT WITH ARTIE ?!?!
Just drinks. Can you ease up on the interrobangs?


So you do know him!
Everyone knows Artie. I stayed with him in Berkeley when I first came to the States.
It was after I left the pack, in my wild, rebellious phase before Skin Horse straightened me out...
It's mostly medicinal! I have bad eyes!
I BREATHED IT! DO YOU KNOW ANY AMERICAN COPS I CAN SURRENDER TO?
I'd like to hear this story.
I'd like to hear how you're all gaybones now.


So, um... is this your first date with... you know...
A nonhuman or a man?
Um. Either.
Sigh... I admit I'm surprised by my own reaction.
I've struggled to establish a sexual identity I feel comfortable with... and, well, I'm usually attracted to women...
That's okay. I think Artie's usually attracted to men.
But then I thought, hey, I do have the perfect pumps for it!


Look, this doesn't mean- I'm not- it's just one man who's not even technically a man-
Eh... it happens with Artie.
Man is exogamous- you want to mate with the stranger. Even less humanoid transgenics get attention in... certain circles.
Nick warned you about Second Life.
My point is, he's human enough to attract humans, but alien enough to trip the big not-our-tribe switch.
Plus he sounds just like Peter Jennings.
Ted Koppel. I know, it's weird.

Unity




There you are! The missus and I have been looking all over!
Eh?
The Council meeting's been moved to the transgenic-friendly vegan café next door.
Council meeting?
Er... you are the SH agents, right?
Sorry! I was distracted by my sexual paradigm shift!
And I was distracted by Tip's sexual paradigm shift!
Ah. Hard to tell with my feeble nocturnal eyes.


We're late for the Council meeting!
It's okay! I sit in on this thing every year!
Why, hello, litterer.
Grrf.
DON'T TRUST THE BLOND ONE! HE OWNS A HAT!
THUNDERCLOUD
LIMELIM
NIUE
SQUEAKER
SEE, TOM!!
...and this might actually be one of the better years.
Good to know.
tardiness arouses my wrath


Listen, Ms. Thundercloud, I'm here on assignment. Let's forget my rampage in D.C.
Oh, it's forgotten.
Good ...
We're more concerned about the one in New Orleans.
Oh.
Loitering. Trespassing. Cement-standing. Public intoxication.
It was New Orleans! It's illegal not to be publicly intoxicated!
"Cement-standing"?


We have people looking into the Cypress fires. If you're involved, so help me...
Us?
One hears things. Now if you'll take your seats...
Sometimes I just want to bite that woman.
Careful. You don't want to add to this list.
Hey! Hey! Give it!
Ooh, you ate a tray of samples. That's 40 to life in Texas.


Thank you all for coming. As you know, we had hoped to devote this year's conference to our petition for suffrage.
The recent events in Louisiana, however, raise more urgent questions.
fsss
We question our safety. We question whether the government is targeting us.
sss
sss
Do we question all this smoke?
YES WE QUESTION THE STUPID SMOKE!


Something's wrong. Clear the room.
FEDERAL AGENTS! EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY!
What the-?
Rawr!
Don't panic! Exit in an orderly-
SIGH
SLAM
RAAAH
Er... T-shirts, anyone?




Found thif in a thtorage clothet.
Acetone. With an improvised fuse.
I's
Looks like mostly nylon. It melted before it burned.
Thank heaven for that.
Who would make a bomb out of nylon and nail polish remover?
You.
Never! My bombs would be Egyptian cotton and single malt.
I'd use Franzia and old blue jeans.
Enough!


You two can lay off the investigation. We've contacted local human authorities.
You sure that's wise?
Yes, of c—
SLAM
Look! A bear!
Snoot it!
YAUGH!
TOSS
SMASH!
tinkle
Oh, very well. Impress me.
Yes'm.


I'm not surprised by this attack. It was only a matter of time before some human hate group targeted the event.
Every year we urge attendees to keep a low profile, and every year they get more careless.
Why, I hear we had transgenics walking the streets in broad daylight, barging into human bars...
...and booking tables at trendy brew pubs for our double date, right?
At least I didn't toss any cops.


We can't ignore the possibility of an inside job.
A transgenic trying to kill other transgenics?
Maybe the League picked up a sleeper agent. Who here owns a gallon jug of acetone?
A big nail-polish-wearing dino-saur?
Yes, now how about a non-ridiculous suggestion?
That was my non-ridiculous suggestion.
Sorry, ma'am.
Well, I never!


Thanks, ma'am. We'll be in touch.
Hmph.
Well, that went nowhere and smelled bad.
I think we're asking the wrong questions.
When was the bomb planted? How was it done?
Who moved the meeting to that café?
Artie?
He talked up the vegan quiche.
Well, this puts a crimp in my evening.


Artie is **not** our man! He's been with the League forever!
Maybe that's why. Times changing... leaving him behind...
But you like him!
This is **terrorism**. We can't let personal feelings interfere.
So I guess your date tonight is off.
Oh no. It's **on**.
It worries me that I can follow your logic, y'know.
And this time I'm putting my hair **up**.


THE
(MOSTLY)
MEN
IN BLACK
ARE
(MOSTLY)
BACK!


Say, did either of you notice anything unusual at the meeting?
Unusual?
your attempt at humor is unappreciated
I talked to a very stand-offish doorknob!


There wasn't much time between the venue change and the attempted bombing.
The culprit had to be nearby when the meeting started.
Clears Leo and H.T. Witnesses have them across town picking up merchandise for their comic.
I didn't see Artie.
Actually, that's really suspicious. He never misses this stuff.
You just said you trusted him!
Given that I was raised by an evil scientist and my best friend is a killer zombie, I may not be the best judge of character.
But this guy's hot.

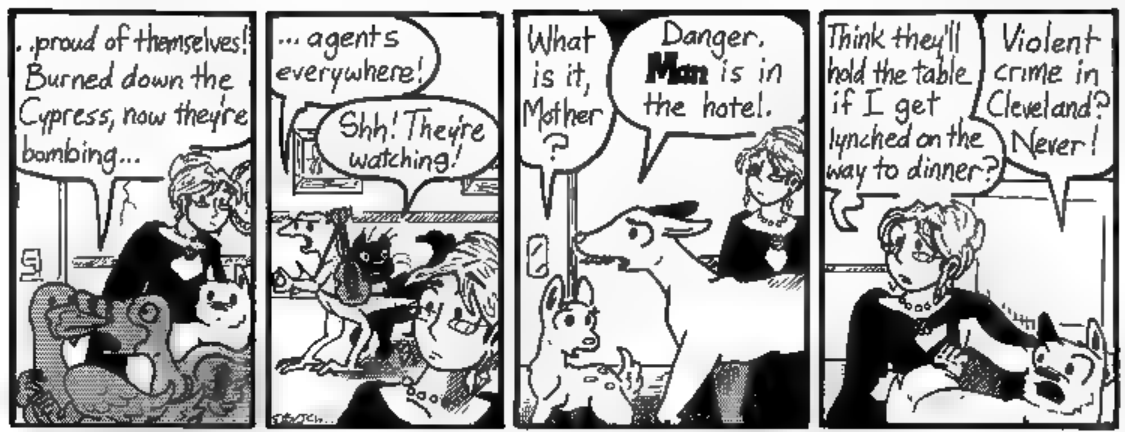

...so now Tip's primping for dinner with our chief suspect.
Cool!
Tip can sex out all his secrets, like usual!
What? No!
Why not? Cuz it's gay this time?
Not just gay. Gay inter-species.
But that's like half your bookshelf back home!
That's fantasy!


Unity, I am **not** telling Tip to seduce Artie!
But he could hell of get us information!
It's not right to exploit a staffer's body for our own ends!
Well, what **else** is he bringing to the team?
Okay, let me walk you through five eyeshadow possibilities for this outfit...
Besides the haunting scent of Chanel No. 5.
Why do you always have to be right?
Wait, no. The color-blindness.


Right, so once this stupid double date is over-
Whoa. Double date?
yes.
I thought you gave up the doggie dating scene. Too much crotch-sniffing.
It's sorta compli-
She's seeing a tiger!
Wait, that's okay but Tip's weird thing ain't?
It's complicated!
White fur with stripes. Daring.


Glad you guys are having all mystery-solving sexytimes.
Me, I'm stuck here punchin' the gator.
What... does that even mean?
I totes cannot make this clearer. I am punchin' this gator.
Oh.
In the face.
Lurk!
It's so hard to tell when Unity is euphemizing.
Like when she throttled that bishop?
wham wham wham wham




. .proud of themselves! Burned down the Cypress, now they're bombing...
... agents everywhere!
Shh! They're watching!
What is it, Mother?
Danger, Man is in the hotel.
Think they'll hold the table if I get lynched on the way to dinner?
Violent crime in Cleveland? Never!


Sweetheart! Good to see you again!
Tip, you look stunning. I've never seen a federal agent pull off drag so well.
Guess where I've concealed my sidearm. Guess!
Later! First, sustainable hors d'oeuvres!
It's nice that me and the talking tiger will be the normal couple.
Tell me about it. His tie completely clashes with my eyes.


Whoa, I'm nervous. Double-dating was the right idea.
Wait, you invited another party? Who—
Sorry I'm late, everyone, and to make up for it I've brought a very nice—
CRASH!
tinkle
A very nice pile of pointy glass fragments?
Right! So! Drinks?


H.T., this is Artie, who does intersapient work for the League, and Tip, the human liaison at my agency.
I know Artie.
It's funny these two met, since they sort of play the same role for different teams—
On the house, Tip. Last night was amazing.
Here. Let me and Tom know when we can see you again.
So to speak.
Nice place.


They're practically ignoring us. Is this normal double-date awkwardness?
Not sure. Things aren't following my usual pattern.
Which is?
Naked in the coat check by the time they bring the salads.
I hate you.
It's bad manners to take both women, but sometimes they just insist...
Seriously, why do I ask you anything?

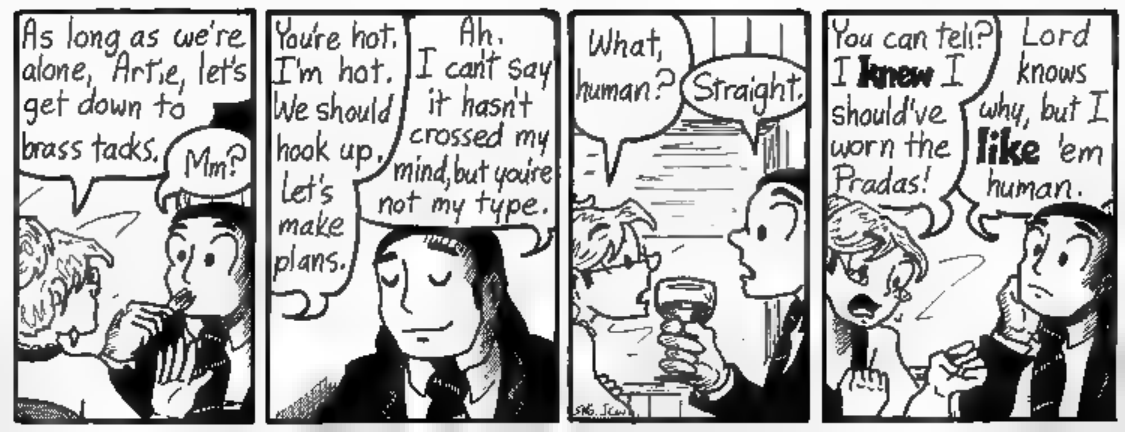

Sorry, Sweetheart, but I think I have to take a rain check.
What? Wait!
I'd better see what's wrong. Keep questioning our suspect!
Got it.
...
So do you work out, or...?
Nope! This is all science!



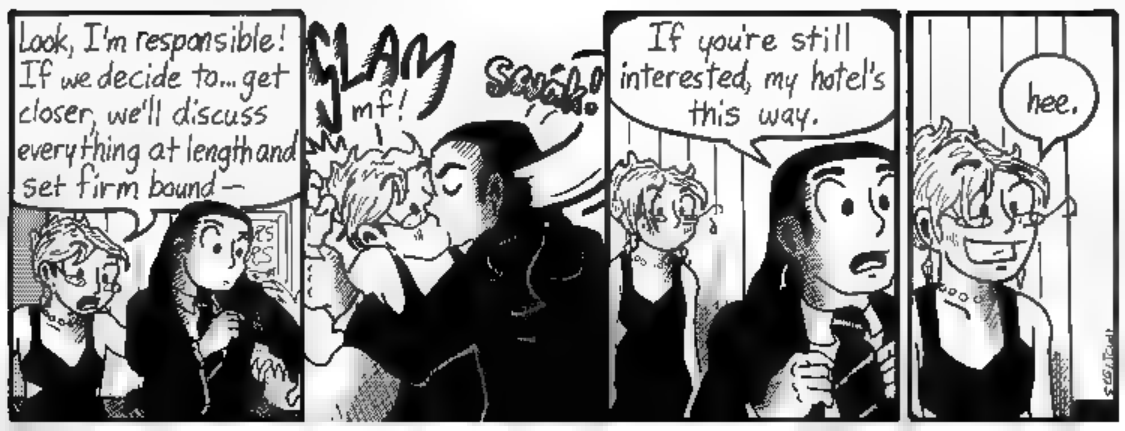

So... ahem... what was that all about?
Oh, the imbroglio with H.T. and myself?
There's an ideological rift in our community of late. H.T. is one of the new young turks.
He doesn't see eye-to-eye with the older beast-men like my...self... are you all right?
Sorry! Even the word "imbroglio" is turning me on!
I could prepare a dossier if this is a bad time.

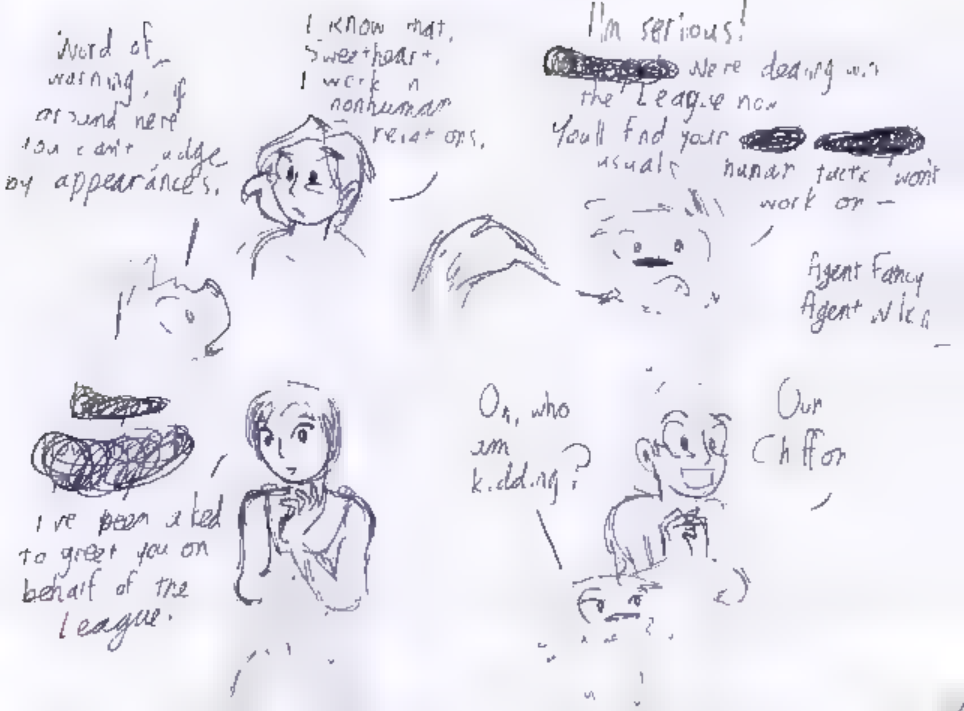

Understand, I'm not criticizing H.T.'s ideals. We agree on most transgenic issues.
Then what's the problem?
Implementation. I'm a pacifist, and obviously I'm open to assimilation. H.T. is... less patient.
If one wanted to oversimplify, one could think of us as Professor X and Magneto...
Or King and Malcolm X?
I'm sorry. I was raised by people with very warped priorities.
And I'm not just saying that because when you're human you're black!


You know, I didn't see you at the Council meeting...
I take it I'm a suspect in the bombing?
Er. Kind of.
Yes, I assumed that was why you upgraded us from drinks to dinner.
You think this is a sting? For all I know, you're the bomber and you're out to seduce **me!**
And what if I am?
That would be **such** a turn-on.
I know. I almost wish I **were** guilty.


As long as we're alone, Artie, let's get down to brass tacks.
Mm?
You're hot. I'm hot. We should hook up. Let's make plans.
Ah. I can't say it hasn't crossed my mind, but you're not my type.
What, human?
Straight.
You can tell? I knew I should've worn the Pradas!
Lord knows why, but I like 'em human.


It's true this is...new for me, but I'd like to learn more about you via psychometric analysis.
I'm not rocket science.
As I said, Doctor, you know about imprinting. When one is close to one's creator, one absorbs things. Linearly, not analogously.
In my case, it's led to identifying with human culture somewhat more than I'd prefer...
Sorry. I meant "psychometric analysis" in the Biblical sense.
Actually, **Some** of me may be rocket science.


Look, I'm responsible! If we decide to... get closer, we'll discuss everything at length and set firm bound—
SLAM
mf!
Sqish!
If you're still interested, my hotel's this way.
hee.

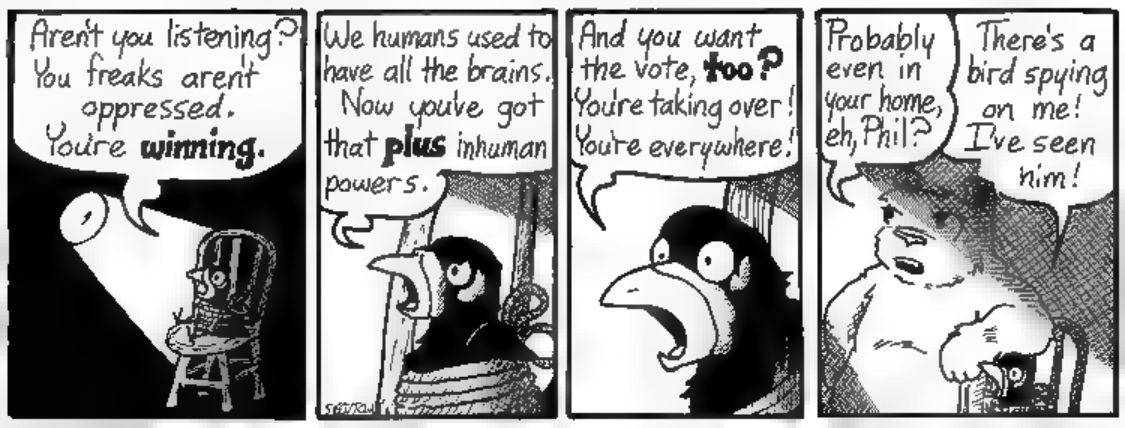

Word of warning, if around here you can't judge by appearances.
I know that, Sweetheart, I work in nonhuman relations.
I'm serious! We're dealing with the League now. You'll find your usual human tactics won't work on—
Agent Fancy Agent Nice
I've been asked to greet you on behalf of the League.
Or, who am kidding?
Our Chiffon


What was that about?
Just politics, my dear. Very boring.
JUNCTION
PUB
I want to hear about it.
Trust me, you don't.
The rodent and I have a history of petty power struggles that I'm sure interest only us.
No, I like boring things!
Speaking of which, what say we pick up dinner at Hardee's instead?


Sorry to kill the romance.
It's fine. I need to focus on the mission anyway.
You know what? Good for you.
Eh?
I respect a woman who puts work above personal... er... you still there?


Sweetheart...
Right! Focusing on the mission now!
Rrgh. H.T., if you were to suspect a convention attendee—
Me, of course
You?
Why not? I'm cunning, resourceful, and unorthodox.
You know, you're not supposed to want credit for this
Yes, but think how clever it'd make me!


I ought to have more leads by now...
You're much too hard on yourself.
I'm serious, H.T.! If I can't find the bomber without help, you have permission to bite my butt.
Agent Fancy! Phil the Mynah just confessed to the bombing!
So if that offer still stands...
Cool it, stud.


Aren't you listening? You freaks aren't oppressed. You're **winning**.
We humans used to have all the brains. Now you've got that **plus** inhuman powers.
And you want the vote, **too**? You're taking over! You're everywhere!
Probably even in your home, eh, Phil?
There's a bird spying on me! I've seen him!


Phil, I don't know how you pulled this off.
Hey, I'm no mastermind. I just follow orders.
I'm merely one foot soldier in the human resistance retaking our planet.
Torture won't work. I can't finger my superiors. I've never even seen them.
No, I mean I don't know how you lifted a jug of acetone.
AAAH! YOU'VE ALREADY CUT MY FINGERS OFF!


What's gonna happen to Phil?
You know nonhuman justice.
Like most of us, he's a legal nonentity. It falls to us to police ourselves.
I fear he'll be thrown into the Cavern, with our other violent criminals and savages.
And all the people with hats or beards, yes?
The Cavern's too good for them!


The Cavern's a death sentence for a little bird like Phil!
Now, let's not jump to conclusions.
After all, he **is** a terrorist operative.
He's delusional!
No, he's clearly an agent of a powerful secret paramilitary hate group...
I thought you didn't want to jump to conclusions.
I lied! I made up an acronym for them and everything!


Tip! There you are! I've been looking all over for you!
I was afraid you'd been swallowed alive by some ravenous beast and– are you wearing jeans?
Er, yeah. They're ArTie's.
Artie?
My dress got. Um. Torn. After, um. Dinner.
So basically I was right.
This was the largest piece I could find.

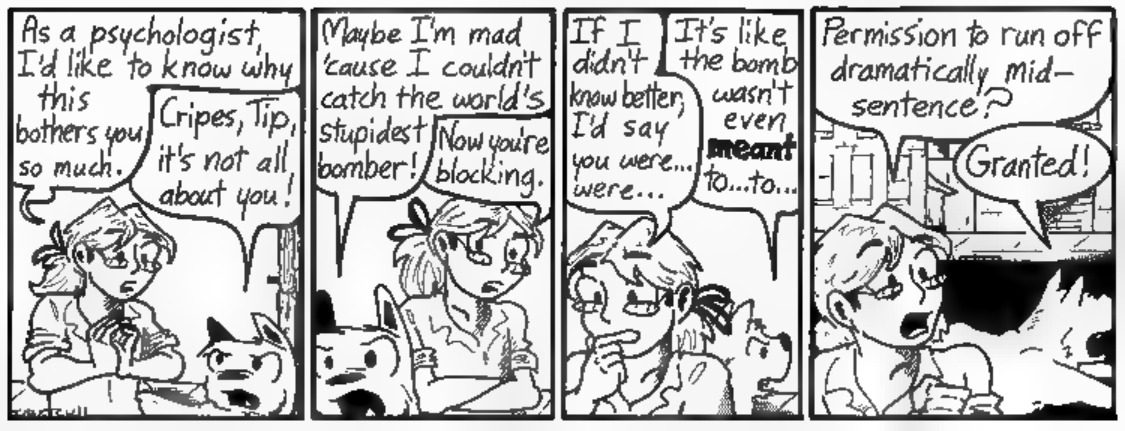

Right... so... better update each other on the mission.
Rignt.
Phil just confessed to the bomb threat, so it's all over but the deportation.
Oh! Good!
I guess all that intel you gathered from Artie is useless now, huh?
Yes. Shame.
You didn't actually gather any intel.
No, no, check out these samples of compostable body rubs...

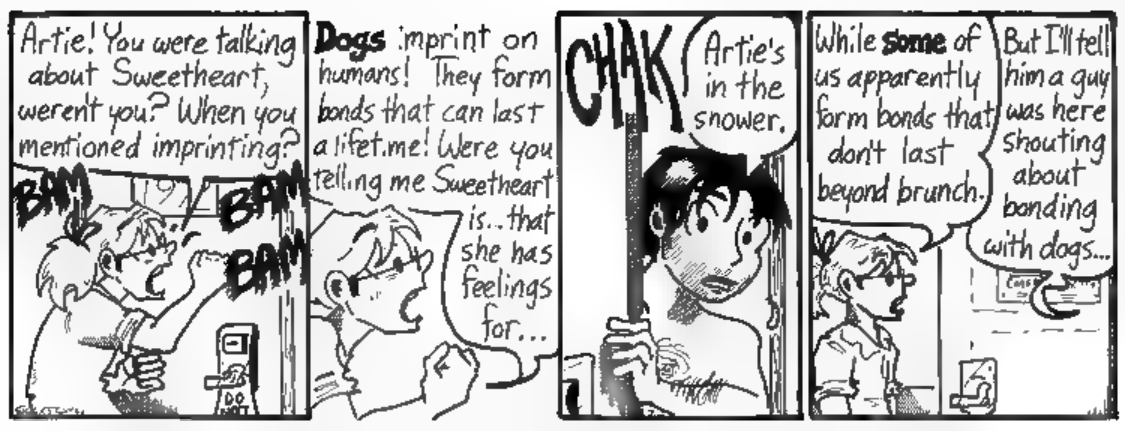

So about last night ...
Sweetheart, I hope we can respect one another's privacy and be discreet about this matter.
Don't worry! I'm not going to pry!
Good. End of discussion.
So who has to tick a new box in his Facebook profile?


Look, it's no big deal. I just...tried something new.
I think that's a pretty big deal.
Experimentation is normal and, in my opinion as a psychologist, healthy! What matters is what I learned!
Which is?
hee.
So what you learned is that you're a slut.
It's a revelation each and every time.


Artie has a beyond-genius IQ. He can lift a car. He cares, very deeply, about important things. He smells like cinnamon and cedar.
He can't fall in love, because true love is between equals, and he's just plain better than us.
But he cares.
He'll care about you. And in the end, it'll tear you up inside.
But the seeeex!
I'm sure it's great!
That's part of the problem, dummy!


Sigh... I'm not mad at you, Tip. It's Artie.
Why? We had a good time, and we agreed it's just one—
He's not human, Tip! Do you get that? He uses his ability to look human to... to SLEEP with your kind!
He's got himself a fake human life and human lovers, and now he thinks he can mess around with my staff!
I'm telling you, the sex was worth it!
Not helping, Tip!


As a psychologist, I'd like to know why this bothers you so much.
Cripes, Tip, it's not all about you!
Maybe I'm mad 'cause I couldn't catch the world's stupidest bomber!
Now you're blocking.
If I didn't know better, I'd say you were... were...
It's like the bomb wasn't even meant to...to...
Permission to run off dramatically mid-sentence?
Granted!


Artie! You were talking about Sweetheart, weren't you? When you mentioned imprinting?
BAM
BAM
BAM
Dogs imprint on humans! They form bonds that can last a lifetime! Were you telling me Sweetheart is...that she has feelings for...
CHAK
Artie's in the shower.
While some of us apparently form bonds that don't last beyond brunch.
But I'll tell him a guy was here shouting about bonding with dogs...


Toss me aside like yesterday's newspaper, will you? Well, I'll show you! I'll... I'll...
I'LL SLEEP WITH LOTS AND LOTS OF HOT WOMEN, DAMMIT!
STOMP
STOMP STOMP
STOMP
I'm aware that's not much of a threat, but at least I plan to follow through on it.


...it shouldn't bother me, but he's forgotten me already! And now I think my best friend's in love with me!
mnch mnch mnch
What now? What do you do when love goes crazy like this?
mnch mnch
mn
mnch mnch mnch
mnch mnch mnch

One could say that was a.. riveting story, chap. Hohoho...

You gave him little Hoover. This is totally fuckin' awesome!


Ah, hey, Agent Fancy! I was just-
Cut the crap, Leo. Tell me about Phil.
Phil?
Little black bird? Takes orders from a humans-first hate group?
Yeah, listen, about that-
There is no hate group. Phil is your cat's paw, right?
Strictly speaking, this is my-
Y'know who liked last-panel gags like that?
Hitler.


You told Phil to use a nylon fuse. You wanted a dud bomb.
Oh god, you're going to hurt me, aren't you?
Acetone is used in printmaking. It's an art supply.
I know how this looks, but—
You wanted us to feel like the lions in your comic. Hunted. Persecuted.
It wasn't me! It was all-
...hey, you read my comic!
I liked it when Lion #2 did it with Antelope. Can we focus, please?
SKOJSCwi


It was H.T. I found him going through our art supplies the other day.
I knew something was up, but I didn't know he was building bombs! I swear!
I believe you, Leo.
Because we're friends?
Because the universe won't throw me a bone, hanky-panky-wise.
Wow, lotta double meanings in there.


So H.T. galvanizes the League against humans and get rid of our resident bigot.
Slick.
So, frankly, what's the big deal?
I dunno, that he risked our lives for his "cause"?
Phil's loopy enough to get talked into anything. He's no angel, but he's not the villain here.
Just so we're clear, I'm not the villain either, right?
Oh, grow a mane, Leo.


You're comin' wif me an' tellin' thith to the Counthil.
Noooo!
I can't betray my partner! He made AsLAN into something great!
It's not just a dumb gaming strip anymore! It's a statement! It gives a voice to the voiceless!
And gives you chicks and cash.
We spend a lot of that money on Xboxes for zoo animals.


Forget it. If you won't help me, I'll collect my own evidence.
How?
If H.T. is trying to turn us against humans, I'll pretend he succeeded.
You're going undercover?
Of course. I'm a secret agent trained in subterfuge...
Boy, do I hate humans!
Oh, hi, H.T.!
Why, hello.
Me too.
Care for a swim?

Log / Online Life / In-Person

INTERVENTION '11

September 16-18 2011 @ the Hilton Washington DC/ Rockville




Hey, I know! Let's compare how much we hate humans!
Splendid. You first.
Um, I hate humans so much I'd, er, fake an attack on my own con.
You?
What an amazing coincidence. I hate them exactly that much.
This spy stuff works great!
Dear me, I hope I haven't let anything slip.


AH-HA! You fell right into my trap!
Well, shucks.
You've tricked me into confessing that I manipulated that bird via anonymous emails.
So snowed was I that I even admitted to constructing the decoy bomb.
Okay, "constructing the decoy"... You got a pen?
In my pool bag. Want me to fetch it?


Y'know, I thought you'd be tougher to crack.
It's a tiger thing. We turn right to butter.
Heyyy... Don't think you're going to stop me!
I don't. I think you're going to stop you.
You can't manipu... manipu...late... Me..
Mm?
SPLISH
...you can't, right?
Y'know, I thought you'd be tougher to crack.


You do hate humans, you know. They don't treat you like a real person.
I'm not listening to you!
But no matter how they abuse you, you crave their love.
... not listening ...
You'd jump through fire for a word of their praise. So you hate yourself too.
No! I'm a good girl!
You're a fluffy little bundle of denial, aren't you?

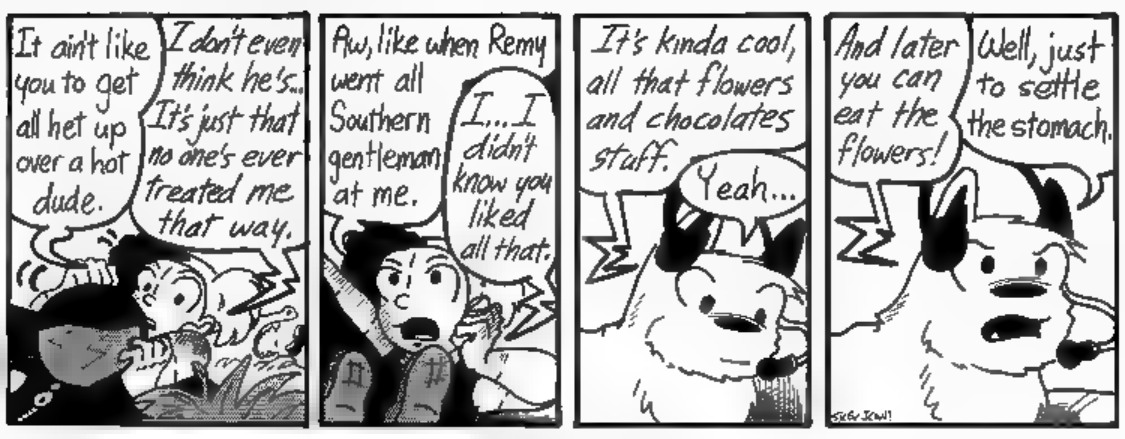

There's a war coming, Sweetheart. I've been saying it for years, and the Cypress proves it.
I want our side to be ready. This wasn't an attack. This was a **drill.**
But perhaps it **was** too risky. That's why I need a sensible voice like yours around.
You've got no right to go around making sense, mister!
I'm just warming up! These are the **weak** arguments!


We need eyes and ears in Washington. Work with us. Do it for our kind.
And for yourself, because I will praise you and pet you and call you a very good girl...
...but I will never make you doubt that you're a woman.
And now you will join me for a swim, because you need to cool off.
yes mister stripey man

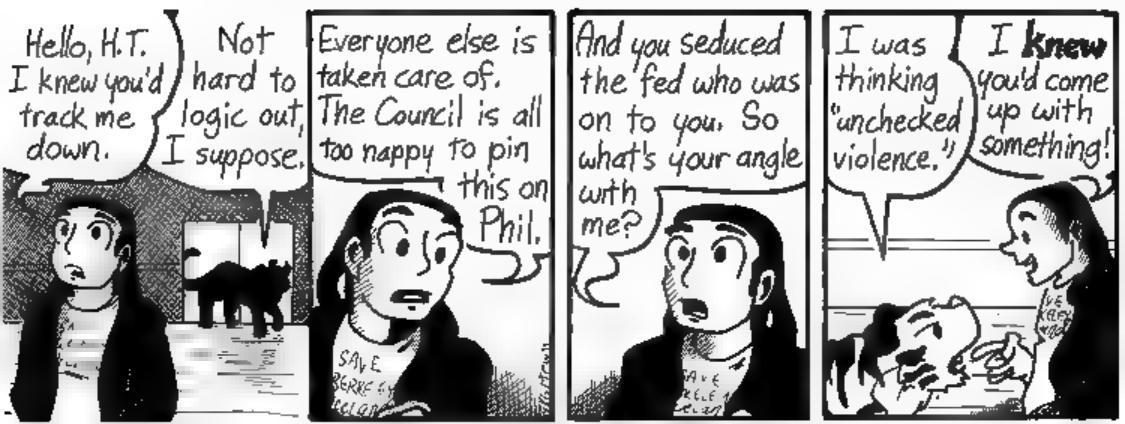

EXTREME
CONSERVATION!


This situation has me so confused. I don't know what to do.
Here's an idea: nothing.
Just stay put and it'll all be fine. Think of Leo— think of me.
You take a nice nap, and I'll be back once I've tied up one last loose end.
It's a good thing you're so nice, or that'd sound kinda sinister!
It's the fangs. Hell on diction.


Sooo... say you plant a bomb, only it's not real. It's intended to be harmless.
And say someone else takes the fall, someone who **intended** to set a real bomb.
And it's all to prepare people for when there **is** a bomb... is that okay?
Hell yeah!
Which part exactly?
I spaced out after you said I got to plant a bomb.


It ain't like you to get all het up over a hot dude.
I don't even think he's.. It's just that no one's ever treated me that way.
Aw, like when Remy went all Southern gentleman at me.
I... I didn't know you liked all that.
It's kinda cool, all that flowers and chocolates stuff.
Yeah...
And later you can eat the flowers!
Well, just to settle the stomach.


Cleveland sounds boss!
It's... confusing. I'm so mixed up right now.
Yeah, with bombs and Tip being half-gay and all.
I can't wait to get home, Unity.
I got your squeaky octopus ready.
Great. See you soon.
Yo.
i miss you.


Hello, H.T. I knew you'd track me down.
Not hard to logic out, I suppose.
Everyone else is taken care of. The Council is all too nappy to pin this on Phil.
And you seduced the fed who was on to you. So what's your angle with me?
I was thinking "unchecked violence."
I knew you'd come up with something!


Did you think I wouldn't figure this out, H.T.? Why would you even try-
rrrRRR
yipe!
Why?
Because we can't deny our natures, can we? Whatever you playact at being, in your gut you know I'm a **cat** and you're a **mouse.**
Gerbil, actually.
And an insufferable pedant. Don't know if **that's** genetic.


Finally I have an excuse to eat you.
The League will find my remains!
Remains? A shock to the system makes you revert to your true form, right, little lab mouse?
snk!!
You'll be substantially less than a mouthful. What do you think of that?
It's the opposite of what Tip said last night.
SAVE
Now that's just inappropriate.
I go to my grave with no regrets!
SAVE


So you feel you've stymied, Sweetheart with your, er...
Feline virility. I'm happy to use what I've got.
Shame. Muliebrity might've had more effect.
Yes, and- what?
I'm sorry. Do you need a diction-ary?
Is this how you want to spend your last breaths? Being a pompous ass?
Yes please!
What say we both shut up so I can eat you?


I'm just saying, your faith in your charisma is the weak link here.
Two more sentences, then I kill you.
Your hold over Skin Horse isn't as strong as you think.
Bad choice. One sentence left
For heaven's sake, you narcissistic twit, SWEETHEART PREFERS GIRLS.
That's... quite a sentence.
Well, somebody had to say it.


Did she- How do you-
Personal experience. And I've known her a while.
She seemed... interested on our date.
She's in denial. She can't deal with her feelings.
I ought to talk to her... I know the problematic aspects of attraction to hominids...
How did this murder turn into an afterschool special?
Next we can tackle your issues!


This changes nothing! I'm still going to eat you!
No you're not. Don't you see?
Once you left, Sweetheart came to her senses, which means that in five seconds--
KHAM
Oof!
Three seconds off. Gotta tighten that.
H.T., YOU ARE TOTALLY UNDER ARREST AFTER ALL.


We're looking into the terror plot, but attempted murder is enough to put H.T. in the Cavern.
On your advice, we're giving Leo community service.
We'll set him up through our outreach program.
And we're remanding Phil to the custody of Artie Narbon.
Wait. What?
I convinced them I have experience with crazy destructive types.
I'LL POKE YOUR EYES OUT WITH MY NOSE!


...so, after you left, I came to my senses.
Yes, I was warned as much.
I mean, the law is the law. And it's a good thing I showed up when I did!
Oh, Sweetheart! We really could've had something, if it weren't for... er...
Well, any number of things, evidently.
Sheesh, I can't wait to get home to my same-sex roommate.


I should apologize for earlier, Dr. Wilkin.
Oh... no apology needed.
I wanted to save Phil from taking the fall for H.T., and that meant stalling you while I arranged his escape.
But then Phil confessed, eliminating further need for, you know, the sex and what not.
Wait. I take back the "no apology" thing.
And then I needed to shower before my big scene!


You! You... you used me!
Well...
You knew all along who planted the bomb! You deliberately misled us so you could follow your own plan!
And when SH started getting too close, you distracted me with your sexual wiles until it was too late to—
Okay, I am getting serious ironic déjà vú here.
But it was fun, right?


The only thing I don't get is why. Why not come to us with the truth?
Tip, do you know where the name of your agency comes from?
Sure. It's from a children's book.
Mm...You and Sweetheart mean well, and you do good work in the community..
...but one day you'll have to ask why you're really here, and that day may be sooner than one would hope.
Contrary to popular belief I am not just in it for shoes and women.
I think I've conclusively disproven that!


Well, you saved Phil in the end. Any clever plans for him?
Not as clever as I'd like. He is dangerously unbalanced.
But madmen tend to keep each other in line. So I'm sending him to my creator's laboratory.
I think he'll make friends.
Yes, but where did you tell him he was going?
I wish this limo'd stop bouncing so I could finish my resumé.
CAUTION! INSANE LIVE ANIMAL


Greetings. I am Bruce, Human-Cyborg Relations. The boss speaks through me.
Um. Hi.
Now. The boss's wife has insisted that he acquire a "cute, yet insane, animal sidekick."
What are your qualifications?
I AM NOT AN ANIMAL! I AM A HUMAN BEING!
Oh, he'll love this one.
Can we put him on the softball team?













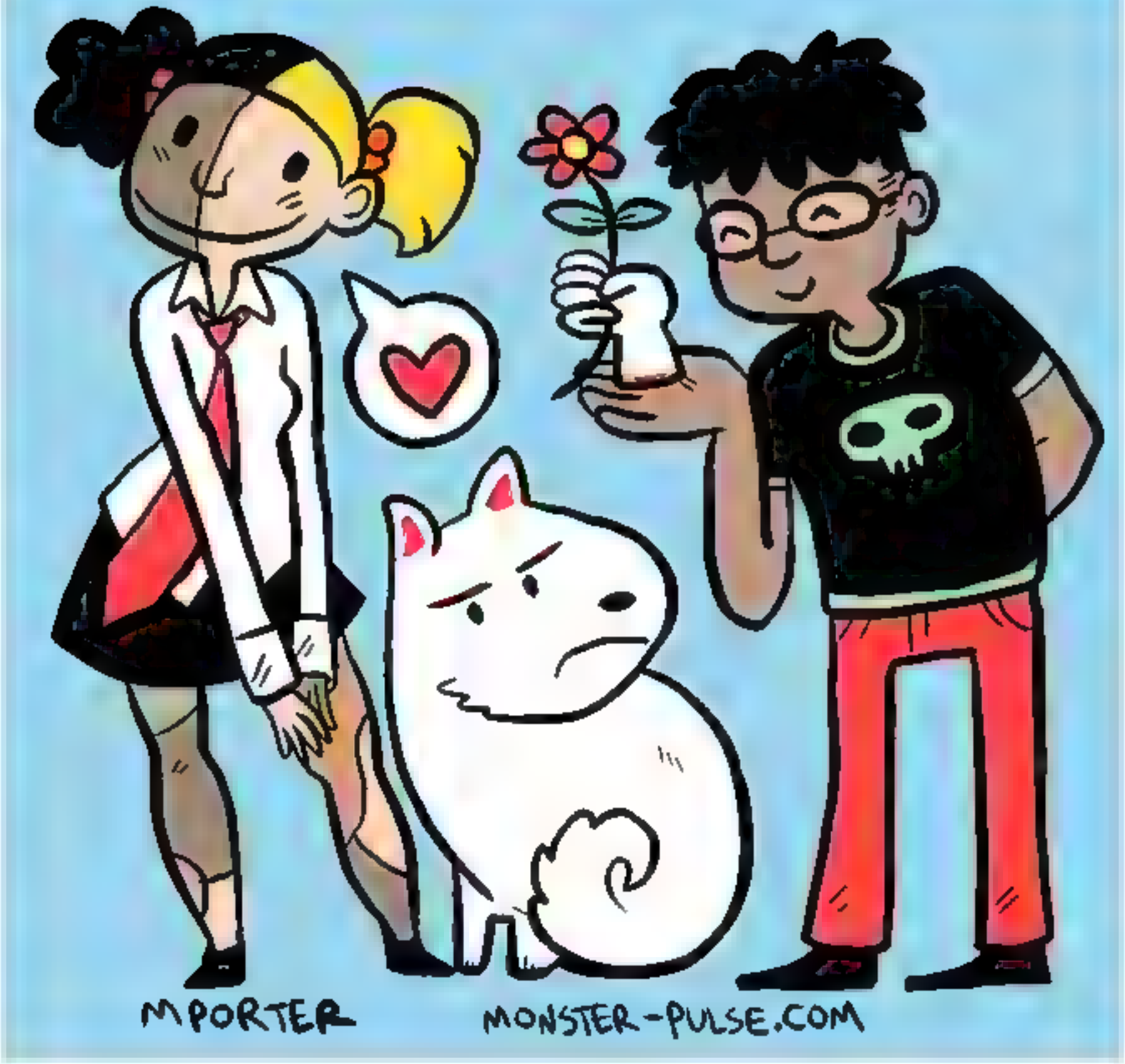





Tip, I'm sorry for flipping out at you earlier.
Huh? Oh! Um, okay.
I mean, it's not my business how Artie lives his life...
Look, I understand. Really. Erm.
And hey, if you want to date outside your species...
Let's dialogue later. Much later. I'll make a note.
With the weekend we've had, that could've gone a lot weirder.


Hey, Unity? You still up?
GESS YR FLITE GOT ~~DELAY~~ ~~DELAD~~ DELAYED
THERES FOOD IN FRIDGE &
UPDATE: NOW THERE IS NO FOOD.
shoppe
UPDATE 2: NOW THERE IS AGAIN.
UPDATE 3+4 SAME THING
It's good to be home.


H.T. thinks there's a war coming. That I'm on the wrong side.
snkxxxksss...
I'm sick of sides, Unity. Let's you and me be our own side, huh?
snxxchickens... chickenbutt...
Whatever crazy we're in for, promise we'll ride it out together.
...in-pants... radio. snkradiopants
Good. Long as you're there.
...at'll do, pig.
pat
pat


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My Side of the Mountain.
Hey, look it. New meat.
Welcome to the Cavern, meat.
What've we got?
Smells like... tiger.
IGER
ABANDON
MINE
SHAF
Very astute. And you two smell like a couple of bravos with a bone to pick.
What's a bravo?
It's Italian for "someone I can use." Listen closely...


Miss Unity's report from Lauisiana is Shockingly Lucid.
Indeed. Gone without a trace, she says...
Then the Fires immolated Mme. Cypress?
No. The fires were a distraction.
Death leaves traces. She's...gone.
Gone where, Madam?
Good lord, when did we install a swamp in the basement?

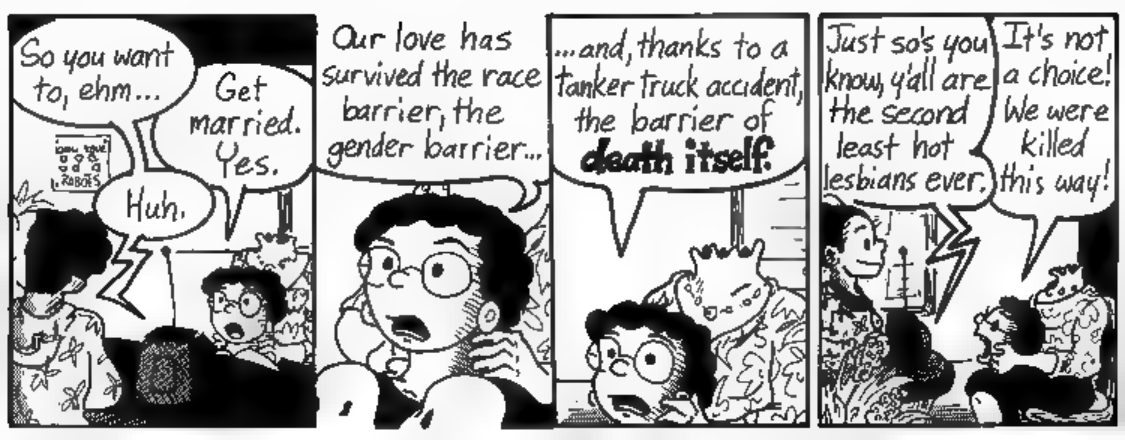

Restricted area! Get out of there!
I... I thought I heard someone crying...
You're not cleared for this sector, Doctor.
Get your hands off me! I have reasonable questions, and I deserve reasonable an—
Wait. Is that a hat romping in the underbrush?
See? Wouldn't you be happier not knowing?


Mr. Green! You've never called me after hours before..
I hear you had an altercation with Security.
Oh! That! Sir, Im so sorry!
Don't worry, Virginia. I've dealt with the issue.
I promise I didn't see a thing and I won't say a—
Those particular guards will never be seen again.
Wait, is this intended to make me stop worrying?
Did they have any noses or ears you'd like delivered?


Sir, is there any reason you're-
Lending you a hand? I've had my eye on you, Virginia.
You did take an interest in the Whirligig project.
You're our top blue-sky researcher. I want you.
I just need to test your loyalty before I can explain certain things...
I hear that involves pistachios.
Walnuts. And no, you haven't been that naughty.


We just need to be sure. Briefing tomorrow.
Yes, sir, but I don't know what you think could compromise my dedication to Anasigma-
Klik
Hmph.
pip
...Okay, he's hanging from the ceiling fan with a machine gun. Don't tell me it gets better.
It's "Punisher fruiting father Warzone," dude. It builds.


Welcome to the mothball-packing offices of Skin Horse.
The big windup guy is our receptionist, but he's offline makin' backups.
So you get face time with the undead bioweapon, and I'm a helicopter on the parking roof.
Which puts the "no scooting head" thing in perspective, huh?
One of us has a head!


So you want to, ehm...
Huh.
Get married. Yes.
Our love has survived the race barrier, the gender barrier...
...and, thanks to a tanker truck accident, the barrier of death itself.
Just so's you know, y'all are the second least hot lesbians ever.
It's not a choice! We were killed this way!


Sorry, can't get you hitched.
New York finally legalizes us, and now the Feds give us guff?
Naw, it's just that you turkeys need a notary to stamp this, and ours is down.
But if you go to any bank with a photo ID-
What, drop me on the service counter?
New York, they've seen worse.
The "height" on my driver's license isn't current.



Created By: General Zoi


We don't have time for this! Our flight leaves in an hour!
Where ya goin'?
Our honeymoon.
Cool, so what do y'all do for a romantic-
AAAHH CANNOT UNSEE MENTAL PICTURE CANNOT UNSEE
You people suck.
... note to self install bleach dispenser in brain tank.


We'll be back in a week. You'd better be able to notarize our license.
Or what, you'll take your business elsewhere?
We the gubmint, head-toters.
Great, disability humor. Let's go, Langi.
Wait! I wasn't calling you head-toters! I was trying to say head-toters!
This job can hug me.
I'm helping!


Well, that was questionable customer service.
It ain't our fault, Ma'am.
I gots my issues, and Zombina here is unfit for society.
Is that so?
I like breaking stuff!
Yes, but does that really make one "unfit"?
Sorry, were you guys talking?
See?
She said "sorry." That's a step up.


Howcum Wilkin didn't draw front-desk duty?
Tip and Sweetheart are fetching new memory for dear Moustachio.
He's taking his sweet time.
The basements have been dodgy of late.
Yeah, I been there. No telling what kinda horror dude's dealing with now!
So then Lisa gets Terrell to go after Robin so Patrick will run back to her...
Sweetheart, I don't care!
STORAGE
PROJECT SKIN HORSE


Fine, no soaps. You go ahead and dish about your love life.
Um... no thanks.
But you always dish about your love life.
I just don't feel like talking.
Artie's bugging you.
No.
Dr. Jones is bugging you.
No!
Being prisoners of the crystal entity is bugging you.
Now that you mention it...

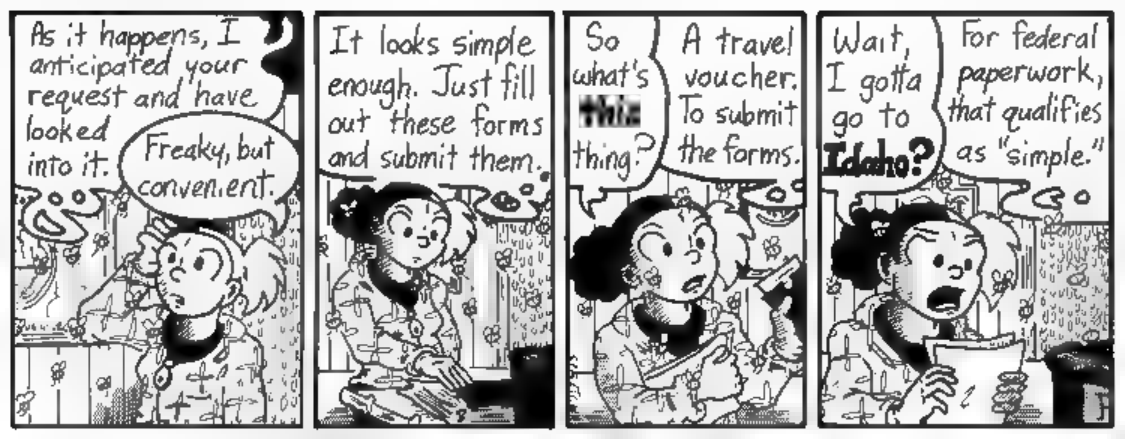

WSSH
WE CHOOSE TO RELEASE YOU TO YOUR SURFACE WORLD.
Yipe!
Oof!
FWMP
Yeah, thanks.
SAVING YOU DEMONSTRATES OUR BENEFICENCE.
But you imprisoned us in the first place!
IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES OUR PERFECT JUSTICE.
You've demonstrated you're random batcrap crazy.
WE HAVE LEARNED MUCH FROM YOUR SURFACE POLITICS.




Hey, boss monster. Got a sec?
Certainly. Have a seat.
It's like this. I noticed today I was kinda bad at client-ing.
Well... not hopeless.
It's heartening to see you take an interest in public deportment. I'm sure we can polish up your...er...
Unity, do stop eating my furniture.
You said I could have it!

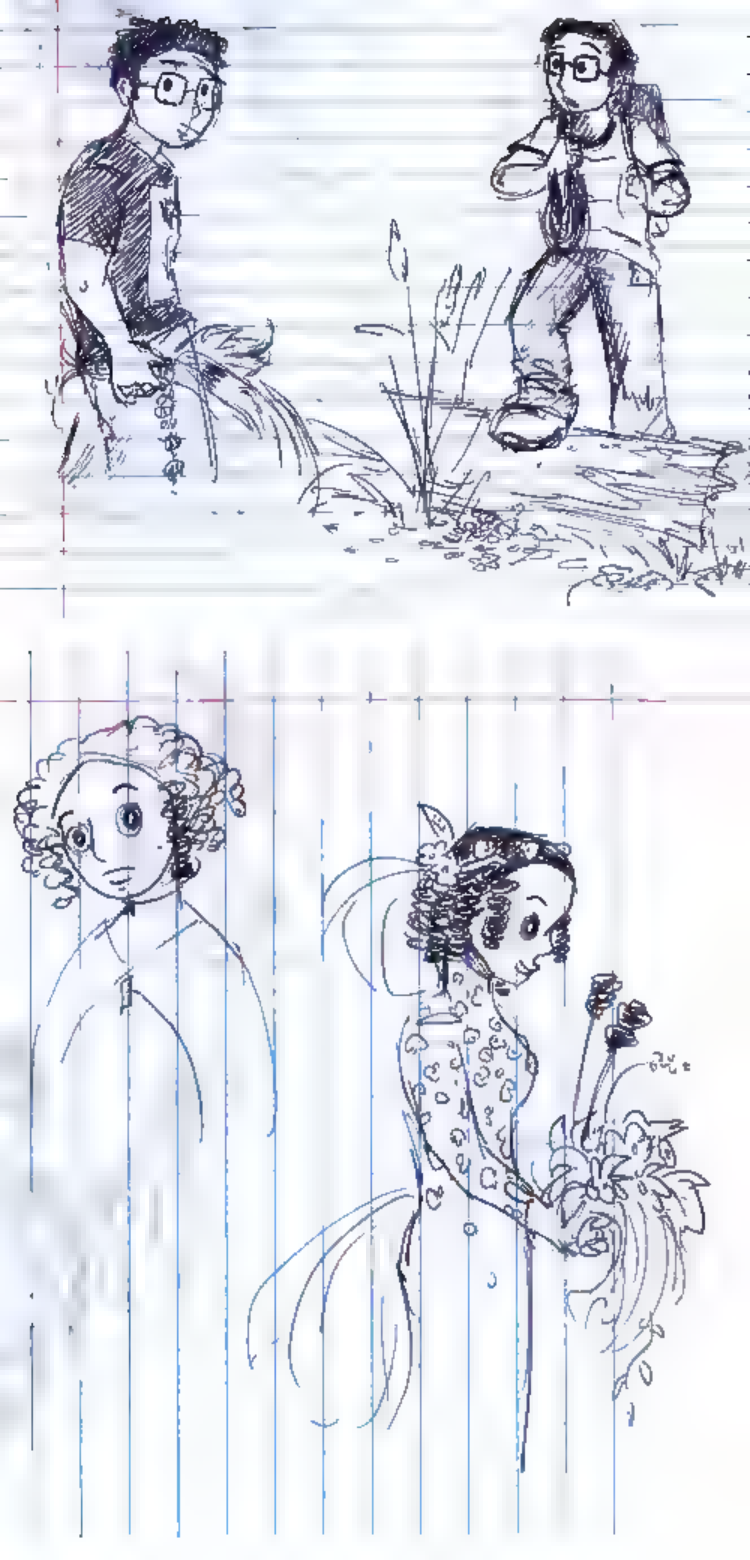

I wanna be able to notarize stuff, like M.
Thats an excellent idea, Unity.
Moustachio isn't always available, and we could use a second notary.
This could allow you to develop useful skills. Integrity. Protocol. Responsibility.
Tip says I can charge up to $2 50 every time I stamp!
Avarice! Also useful!


Do you need $2.50 that much? I do pay you.
Yeah, but Sweetheart handles the money at our place.
I guess there's a thing called "rent," and babe says I'd blow it all on Superballs.
Surely you get an allowance.
Sure. I spent it on Superballs.
Sweetheart and I need to have a chat.
HOLY CRUD, EVERY NOTARY THING EQUALS FIVE SUPERBALLS.


As it happens, I anticipated your request and have looked into it.
Freaky, but convenient.
It looks simple enough. Just fill out these forms and submit them.
So what's this thing?
A travel voucher. To submit the forms.
Wait, I gotta go to Idaho?
For federal paperwork, that qualifies as "simple."

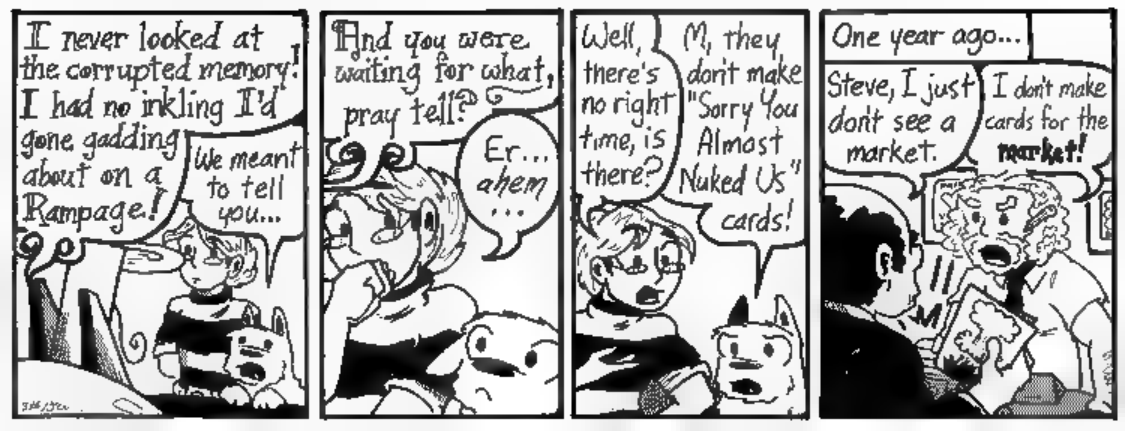

You're not gonna freak out over me flying solo, are you?
Of course not! Idaho's safe and dull.
Babe, you can get worked up over tax law.
Idaho is WAY duller than tax law.
Whoa, for real?
Yeah. Sure wish I could go.
Heeey, remember filing that 1040 SCH-D?
No.
Crazy times, huh?
No.

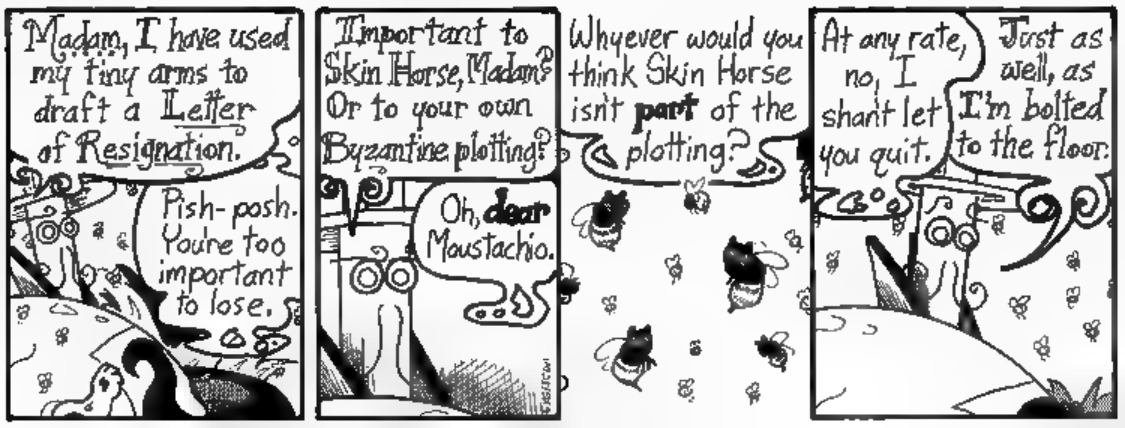

Being a notary is a big responsibility. Can you handle it?
Sure! I'm awesome!
I mean it! You'll have to be aware of our clients and their needs. You can't overlook a thing.
People will rely on you.
Yeah, but you've taught me how...
service is my only joy




And...done! Out with the old memory, in with the New!
How's the new memory drum, M?
klik
ping!
Pleasant as a hot toddy on a Winter's Eve.
Must be nice to just **forget** like that.
I mean, if **I'd** almost nuked the city last year, I'd sure want to-
WHAT?
Ah geez, opened my mouth again.
Back in with the old memory! Back in!


Enjoy Idaho, Unity. It'll be dull without you.
Aw, you love it.
Heh... well, we need Someone to stir things up on those slow, quiet days of—
GOD'S TEETH, WHY DIDN'T ANYONE TELL ME I TURNED EVIL?
Never mind. You're covered.
Thanks, M!


I never looked at the corrupted memory! I had no inkling I'd gone gadding about on a Rampage!
We meant to tell you...
And you were waiting for what, pray tell?
Er... ahem...
Well, there's no right time, is there?
M, they don't make "Sorry You Almost Nuked Us" cards!
One year ago...
Steve, I just don't see a market.
I don't make cards for the market!


Madam, I have used my tiny arms to draft a Letter of Resignation.
Pish-posh. You're too important to lose.
Important to Skin Horse, Madam? Or to your own Byzantine plotting?
Oh, dear Moustachio.
Whyever would you think Skin Horse isn't part of the plotting?
At any rate, no, I shan't let you quit.
Just as well, as I'm bolted to the floor.

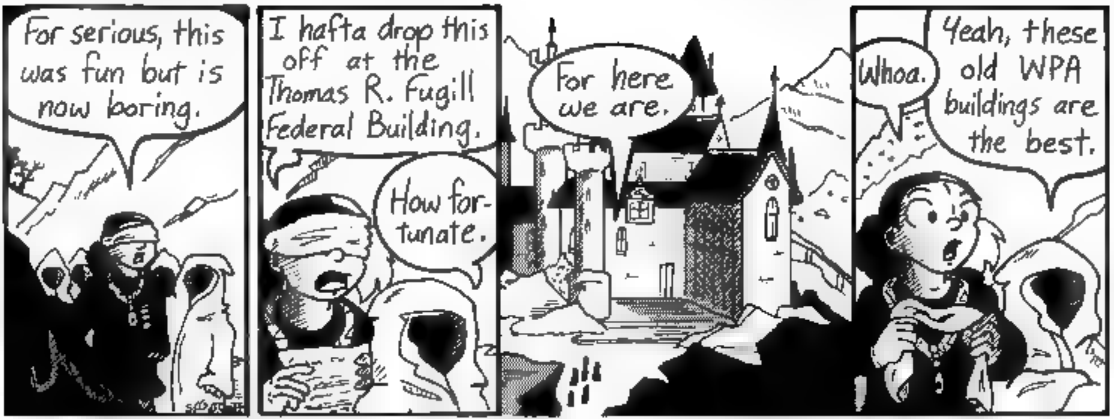

Hey, Tip. What's up?
Oh... personal issues, that's all.
Well, lay it on me, bro.
Are you sure?
We're still friends, right? We should talk more.
Well... I think I may be too attractive.
And now I recall why we don't.
I switched conditioners, but it doesn't seem to help...


I learned that S... someone I deal with professionally has feelings for me.
Gad, what is with your department?
It's Season Sux of "Buffy" over there with all the wangsty drama! I already have to talk Nick through his hopeless crush...
Wait, Nick? You mean...
Eep! Forget it! Don't tell him I told!
Nick's in love with me too?
You're a heck of a psychologist, you know that~




Holy crud! Idaho!
Man, this is the butt-end of nowhere. What gives?
Good thing I packed heavy, cuz I've gotta be the only humanoid being around for miles!
Oh, go on, tap her on the shoulder.
I wanna see how long we can keep going.
Noisy birds, though.


Agent U.N.I.T.Y., Project Skin Horse, applicant for permanent federal notary status?
Um, yeah?
THWAK
Ow!
Dude, uncool! What was that for?
Er... knocking you out?
Oh. It's easier if I just close my eyes and pretend hard.
I asked for dishwashing duty, I begged, but nooo...


For serious, this was fun but is now boring.
I hafta drop this off at the Thomas R. Fugill Federal Building.
How fortunate.
For here we are.
Whoa.
Yeah, these old WPA buildings are the best.


Who are you dudes?
The National Notary Association.
Wait, you're all just Notary Publics?
Please. Notaries Public.
What's the diff?
Ask the Long Riders.
We heard an erroneous pluralization.
Forgive her, Warchief. She is but a petitioner.


Hey! Nobody pokes me with pointy sticks!
Somebody does, and he is me! Bind the petitioner!
Think you can cuff me? Yinz need to do your research.
I ate steel like that for breakfast, pal.
Ah, but we notaries wield the power of paper.
fwp
I... keep pulling... but it won't... come... off...
To the Scrivnarium!


You submitted a request form to see this one, Your Exactness?
Yes, Paul. Unbind her.
Unwise, Abbess. She's trouble.
Yeah! I ate a little old lady like you for breakfast!
I thought you ate steel for breakfast.
Oxygen tank.


So who's the old bat?
Speak with respect!
This is the High Abbess. Try anything and she'll hand you your butt.
She will then certify in triplicate that you legally took possession of your own butt.
Your demise shall have a scrupulous paper trail!
Paul, you flatterer.


Lady, I am getting dangerously cranky.
Very well. Do as you wish.
RAAHH
ping!
Thwip
Leave us, Paul. We are ready to begin.
I just... want... to drop off... this stupid application...


This is 50-75% freaknuts. Notaries are warrior monks since when?
Since always.
Our order was founded by Marcus Tiro, secretary to Cicero himself.
For millennia we have worked in secret to ensure the smooth operation of society.
Yeah, now explain the chi-powered smackdowns.
Typing muscles.


I suppose you're wondering why I've taken an interest in you.
No.
My sleep is troubled by portentous dreams. A storm brews.
Huh.
My dreams speak of you as well. Do you wish to hear them?
Nah.
If you listen, I'll make sandwiches.
You're on, crazy monkess.


I dreamed a dark wave from the past consumed our order... and the world.
And ahead of it strode a shining general.
Cool! Wanna hear mine?
I dreamed I ate all the pillows in the house!
Try to focus, Petitioner.
And when I woke up all the marshmallows were gone!


My dream also spoke of one who could save us.
Composed of parts many yet one, a being of great potential.
But consumed by barely-suppressed hunger and violence.
So obviously a civil servant.
Plus I'm an omnivorous construct zombie.
Whatever.


THE FOOL.


If you are to help us, you must become one of us. A Notary.
Yes! Here! Take!
The application's not all. There is also a gauntlet of deadly trials.
Waaait.
First paperwork, then deadly trials?
Yes.
Good, cuz paperwork is hard.
You've drawn penises in every blank.


The first step on the Path is to empty one's mind.
Nnng... done.
First, take a deep brea-
LALALA!
Can't process language! Empty mind!
Petitioner, when I said—
This is cool! I got no moral compass or nothing!
The first step on the Path is now "use your indoor voice."
Remind me - how's bladder control work again?


My mind's empty as a meat locker! I am rad at enlightenment!
Okay! Change in my unerring wisdom!
You must go to the forest and prepare yourself.
Sure! Can I do it topless, like Rambo?
Return in three days.
You didn't answer my topless question.
It's normally three hours, but I need to make an aspirin run.


Effin' aye, my own mystical woods-type training!
Now I'm enlightened, my mind is free to ponder the world's great questions.
Do baby birds like the taste of barf, or are they just being polite?


Nuts!
At this rate I ain't never gonna figure out the mysteries of the universe.
But if I open my mind and wait, something'll hit me. That's what the Abbess s–
YAAAAAAAAHHH
erk!
WUCHP
yay


You okay up there, sky lady?
No!
Nothing's gone right! Even my parachute failed me! This day cannot get worse!
blink
blink
Must... kill... creator ...
AHH! Blueberry waffles! Blueberry waffles!
SHOOF




I found my creator in a tree, can I eat her when my conditioning wears off?
SLAM
Interesting. And where do you come from?
I will say nothing.
I don't know where Unity has deposited me, but under no circumstances will I betray my mission.
You look wretched. Come in and have some cocoa.
Dr. Lee, Anasigma tech corps, and oh please yes.


My company sent me here to investigate rogue robot sightings.
So you did not come here seeking our order.
I don't know what I'm looking for! This mission is the silliest thing I've ever heard!
So what is this place?
The mountain fastness of an ancient order of Notaries Public.
People keep moving my silliness benchmark.
My silliness benchmark is your mom.


Unity, I was supposed to rendezvous with a field team. Where are they?
Didn't see 'em, didn't eat 'em.
Speaking of which, what **are** you doing here?
Notary Public training!
You're a super-soldier! What possible interest could being a Notary hold?
Novice! To the Notarial Armory!
Yes!
Right, s.lliness.


As we walk, Doctor, tell me about these robot sightings.
tk tk tk tk
It's nothing... probably just a lost Machine Union rep.
WHOP
Honestly, I have no idea why Anasigma's interested.
So you have no fears?
Well, yes, but you already let her into the armory.
KLIK

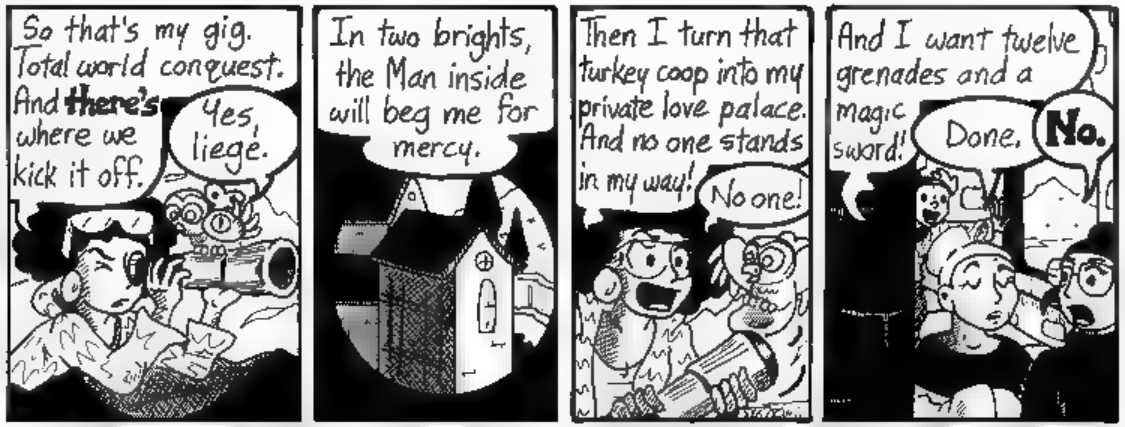

One of their people eluded us, General.
wrrr
She has warned the Abbess. Now is the time to unleash your dark power!
For the last time, little man, it is not "dark power."
Yes, liege, but-
klk
It is black power, you dig?
I dig, Great One.


Your report displeases me, J.L.
Abject apologies, General.
We should have neutralized this Dr. Lee.
That's not my beef, child.
Then what, liege?
Your field reports are so dang square!
Sigh... Hey, "mama," my "bad" for not "whacking" that "jive queen."
Better.


Narb
The Perfect Call
Narbonic
The Perfect Collection Book One
By Shannon K. Garrity


I don't collar. Why you gotta be this way?
Pray explain, mistress.
Like that! Prissy! You are Joe Lovebody, Archimedes of Funk!
Witn a beat and a place to stand, you should be able to rock the Earth!
I could essay another "Rap," if it would please you.
Did I not use enough helical gears, or what?


"Yo," listen well while I represent My grievances re: the government!
Joe. No.
My mortification is boundless.
Shoot, ain't your fault.
Ever since that cracker in a dress, none of my robots have soul!
[word to your maternal parent]
Very bogue, Chicken Jim.


So that's my gig. Total world conquest. And **there's** where we kick it off.
Yes, liege.
In two brights, the Man inside will beg me for mercy.
Then I turn that turkey coop into my private love palace. And no one stands in my way!
No one!
And I want twelve grenades and a magic sword!
Done.
No.


I'd appreciate it if you didn't lie to Unity. She's impressionable.
Sorry?
You don't really have a magic sword to give her!
That's true.
We do, however, have an enchanted Notarial Seal.
OH, COME ON!
Shiiiny.


Behold: Executor! Seal of Thomas Fugill, First American Notary!
The legends sayeth it can emboss solid stone two cubits deep!
DO WANT.
Ker
Novice, wai—
The sign sayeth, "No touchy."
Three thousand and seventeen little black boxes, please...


So do I get the glowy stamp or are you just teasing me?
Only the Chosen may lift the Seal.
And only one who knows the birds and beasts of the land may be Cho-
THIS IS ABSURD!
There's no such thing as magic stamps! Or lightning that cares if you know about birds!
Or- or-
I need to have a little lie-down.
We have a spec'al couch just for scientists.



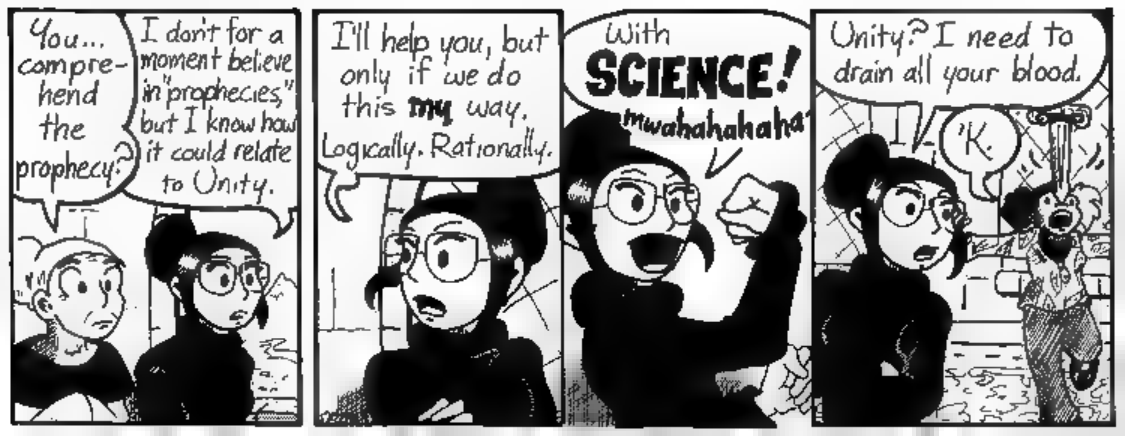


Please stop moving
my silliness benchmark.

Shin B[illegible] [illegible]ment by Shawcun K. Garrity & Jeffrey C. Webb

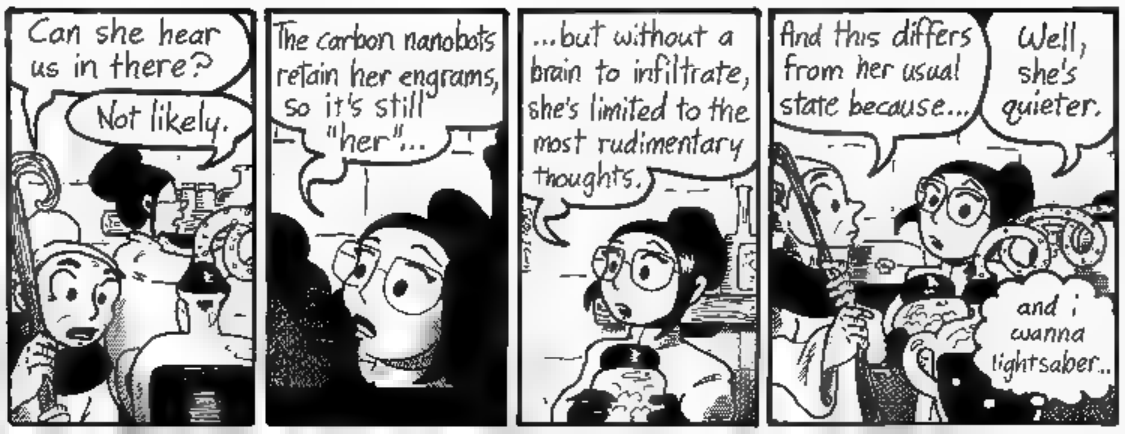

Feeling better?
I'm not a mad genius. I don't deal well with nonsense.
What nonsense?
All right: number one. You had a bad dream.
Your response? Offer a radioactive weapon to a violent stranger who wanders by.
It's not radioactive. It's magic.
Problems two through 68, right there.


All this has been foreseen. The prophecy is quite clear.
Mm.
The Seal can be wielded only by one who knows the birds and beasts and is as one with them.
Oh. That is Unity.
Scoff if you will, but— what?
I know exactly what to do.
Now that wasn't foreseen.
I'm feeling much better. Any wine coolers in this place?


You... comprehend the prophecy?
I don't for a moment believe in "prophecies," but I know how it could relate to Unity.
I'll help you, but only if we do this my way. Logically. Rationally.
With SCIENCE!
mwahahahaha
Unity? I need to drain all your blood.
'K.


So this is Unity's blood.
Technically, this is Unity, full stop.
What is that, then?
That is the host vessel.
You're saying this .. substance... "wears" a body, like a suit made of corpses.
Correct.
How is this not mad science, again?
Perspective!


I can't believe you did that.
It's my job.
Anasigma hired me to reverse-engineer and replicate the work of mad geniuses.
U.N.I.T.Y. was our first success.
Turning mad science sane is challenging. Not to be immodest, but I may be the only human alive who can do it.
SNP!
No, how did you get her to sit still?
Invented a game called "Pincushion." Stick her with needles and she's happy.


Can she hear us in there?
Not likely.
The carbon nanobots retain her engrams, so it's still "her"...
...but without a brain to infiltrate, she's limited to the most rudimentary thoughts.
And this differs from her usual state because...
Well, she's quieter.
and i wanna lightsaber..

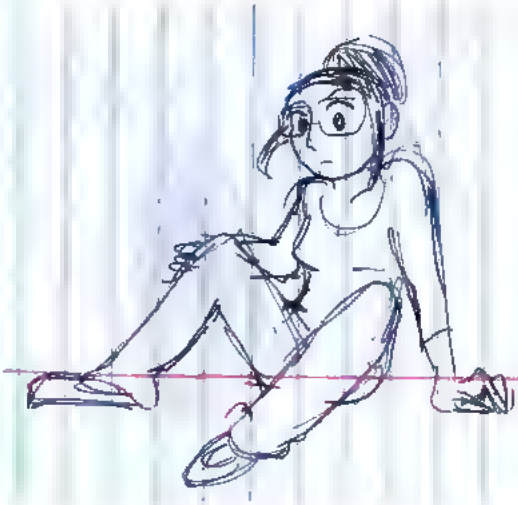













Educational as this is, I fail to see what it has to do with the prophecy.
That's because we're not done!
I asked your monks to trap a mountain goat for me.
menh
I shall now inject the animal with the essence of Unity!
Oh, you poor, poor thing.
Do you have any really big turkey basters?
mehh


You see? Unity can know the beasts of the earth in the most direct way - from within!
How will we know if it works?
The effect may be subtle...
SPRONG!
Duuuude.
...but I'm going out on a limb and calling this a success.

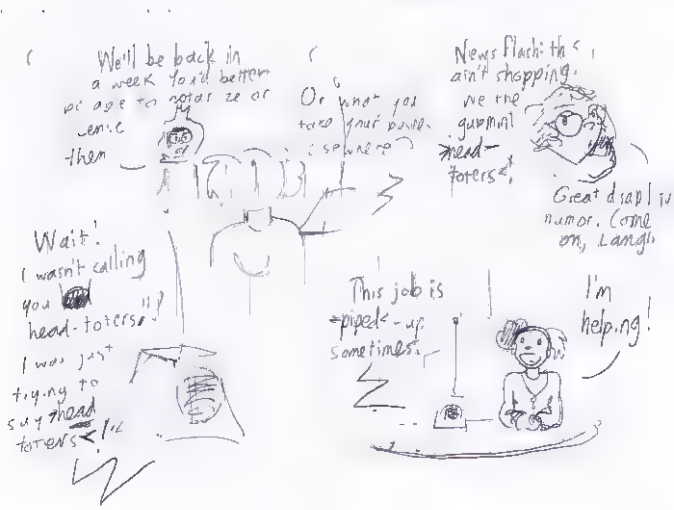

Let's give you this to be sure we get the right goat back.
righteous... righteous...
Now go under-stand wildlife!
LOOK OUT, WORLD, I'M A GOAT!
ZOOM
ha ha ha ha ha
Do we want the right goat back?
Hush..

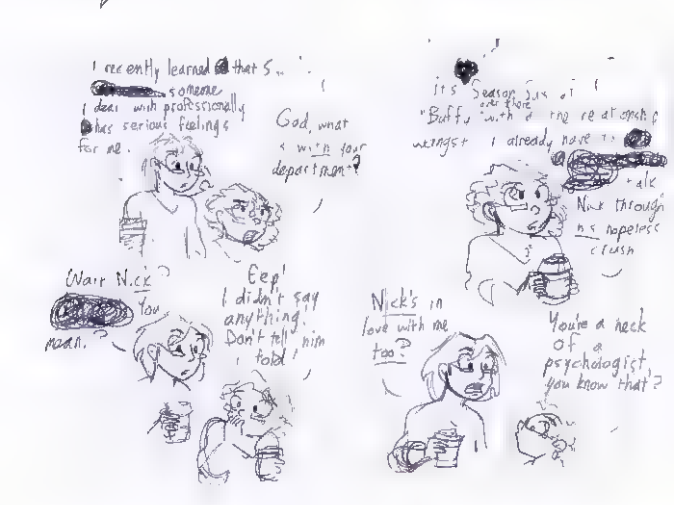

Man, goathood is wicked! THROW HORNS!
Hey, I'm always throwing horns! Frikkin' metal!
No one to tell me what to do! No one to tell me what not to eat!
I want a slushy.


Hey, fellow goat!
Yaah!
Chill, man. I am totes a regular other goat.
Why're you here? It's not sex time!
Ew what gross.
Come back in a few months and we can talk.
Dude, I just want somebody to eat cans with.
And by "talk," I mean, "make sweet, sweet love."


I don't want the goat nasty. I just wanna talk.
Only if we consider it foreplay.
Holy crud, get your tasty brain out of the gutter already!
Why?
We're solitary animals! Sex is the only reason we ever socialize!
I guess that makes sense...
Good. I'll start on the prenup.


I'll gladly take any ass garment, sir, but don't know what you think would compromise my dedication to
We just need to be sure,
and Briefing tomorrow
<Klik<
Anarchema.
Hmph.
p.p
...Okay, so he's hanging from the ceiling fan with a machine gun. Don't tell me it gets better
It's Punisher fruit-picking farmer<
War zone, dude
It only builds


We'll be back in a week to add better ass age to accessorize or sense then
Or what you take your panic spheres?
News Flash: this ain't shopping, we the gunmint head-toters<,
Great disguise, humor. Come on, Langly
Wait! I wasn't calling you head-toters!
I was just trying to say thead toters<
This job is piped-up sometimes.
I'm helping!


I recently learned that someone I deal with professionally has serious feelings for me.
God, what's in your department?
It's season six of "Buffy" with the retrospective wangst I already have to talk through his hopeless crush
Wait Nick You mean.
Eep! I didn't say anything. Don't tell him I told!
Nick's in love with me too?
You're a heck of a psychologist, you know that?


You understand the prophecy
I don't! For a moment there I was a prophet but I know your message and I'm ate to verify
I hope your analysis of my mind is more logically rational
With SCIENCE!
Mwa ha ha ha ha!
Unity, I need to dream on your mind
K.


Okay... "In the event of dissolution, both parties waive maintenance."
The crap are you talking about.
Our prenup. It's a lifesaver, trust me.
The end of the mating season is messy enough without property division headaches.
Dude, you don't own anything.
Well, you've got a pretty sweet bandana.


Forget this noise! This isn't metal at all!
What's metal? Can we equitably divide it?
What a dumb species. Nothing can make this day worse—
BLARG
SPLOOSH
I got barfed by a goat.
Prepare the long sponges!
ma-aa-h


I got barfed by a goat. That is wrong.
It's just a normal animal, Unity.
Without your host body's enhancements, we're going to see rejection.
The purges may also leave bits... behind.
Meaning what?
Hey, sexy, I've got that prenup ready for
aiccee


Being a goat was three kinds of suck.
Three.
We've got something better on deck next!
The monks found a majestic example of Ochotona princeps!
What, for real? Bring it on!
Here she is!
pik pik
Okay, now put it away.
We're going to inject you with grouchy nanobots!
Yes we are!


And here's a little bandana for this you!
I feel like a thing from a Japanese cartoon.
Oh, come now! When were you last all tiny and adorable like this?
CHOMP
Ow!
★#*
That's right. Never.
I wish I was the kind of zombie with infectious bites.


How many of these stinky animals I gotta be, anyway?
You alone will know.
You will be one with the Earth and understand its ways in one glorious moment of—
WOOP
Erk!
And you may be better at dodging birds!
Oh, you messed with the wrong deformed bunny.



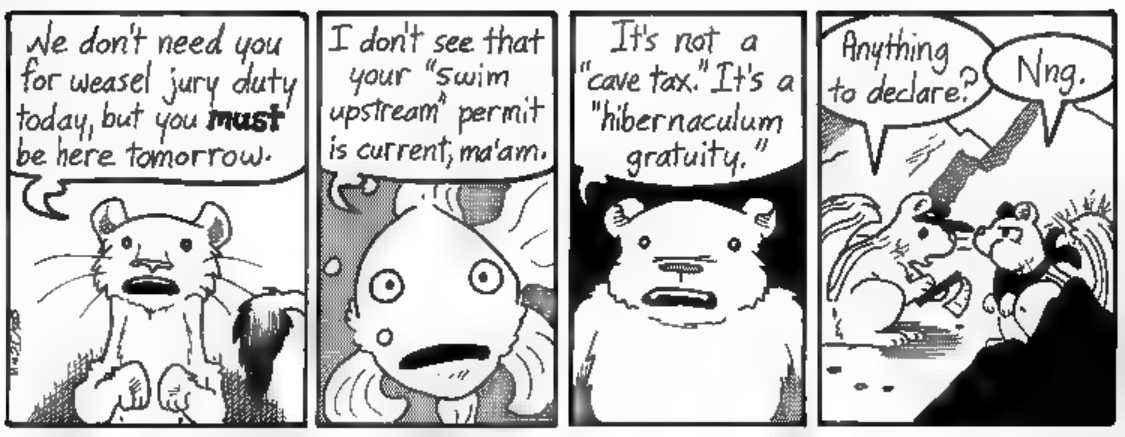

So you don't believe in the Great Seal and the prophecy, but you accept this... this?
I reject your explanation for the seal. It's an unverifiable hypothesis.
Whereas my experiments prove one can make talking animals by injecting lagomorphs with zombie blood!
Kaw!
Ca aaaw
Any sufficiently stupid technology is indistinguishable from magic.
There goes that poor bird.
Skreeeee

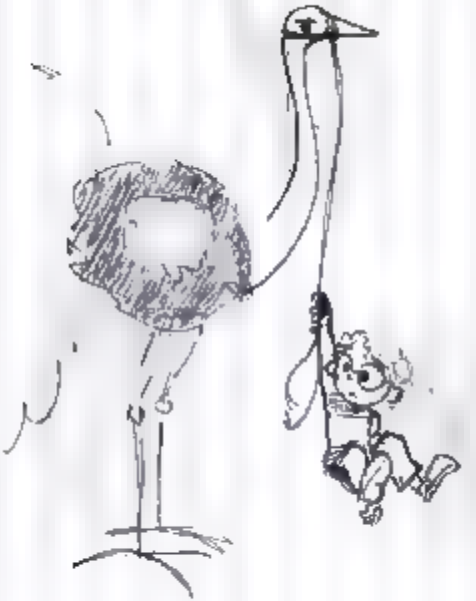

Hey dudes. I am totes a normal dumb groundhog thing like you.
You smell scary.
Probably cuz I just ate a falcon.
Also I am rocking this falcon-skin poncho, which is pretty sweet for a thing I made with no thumbs.
There's something funny about you.
Funny ha-ha, or...?

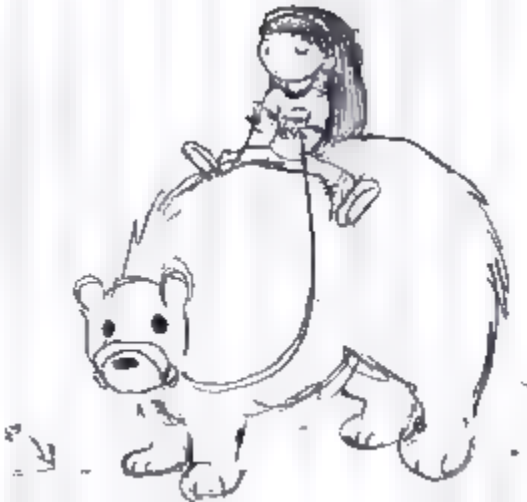

Don't mind them. Welcome to Pika Hill, a Prolagus™ community!
Thanks?
Feel free to choose a spot for your burrow.
I guess here's okay.
Yes, that pebble's a real honey. I'll get started on your mortgage.
My what?
Ooh, and our list of accepted lawn decor...
This falcon gave me paperwork! See what I did to him?


Now, you're one of our "sub-prime" borrowers, which affects a few things.
One, this isn't a fixed-rate loan, but you can refin-
What's up with all you dudes?
You're animals! Where's, like, your free wild spirit and junk?
And this mortgage won't fully amortize over the term of note!
How much do you want this patch of dirt?

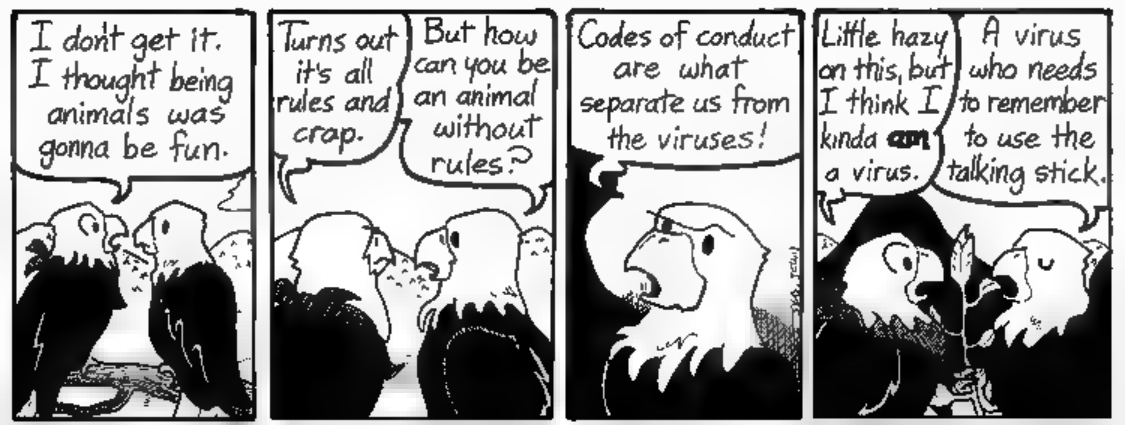

Word to the wise, miss. We have **rules** here.
Meh. Cram this circus.
You won't get your deposit back!
Big deal! I'm done being a glandular hamster!
I'mo get barfed out and be something boss! Like a cougar!
No no no. Put your prey's books in order **before** you eat them.
:sigh:


We don't need you for weasel jury duty today, but you must be here tomorrow.
I don't see that your "swim upstream" permit is current, ma'am.
It's not a "cave tax." It's a "hibernaculum gratuity."
Anything to declare?
Nng.






Thus concludes Special Orders. We now move on to New Business...
I'mo open up New Business on your face.
The chair recognizes the eagle with the bandana.
You'd best frikkin' recognize! I been here five nours!
Would you rather just end the meeting and talk?
Yes! Can we?
Of course.
So you want to motion for Adjournment sine die...
If you weren't on the quarter I'd smack you so hard.


I don't get it. I thought being animals was gonna be fun.
Turns out it's all rules and crap.
But how can you be an animal without rules?
Codes of conduct are what separate us from the viruses!
Little hazy on this, but I think I kinda am a virus.
A virus who needs to remember to use the talking stick.

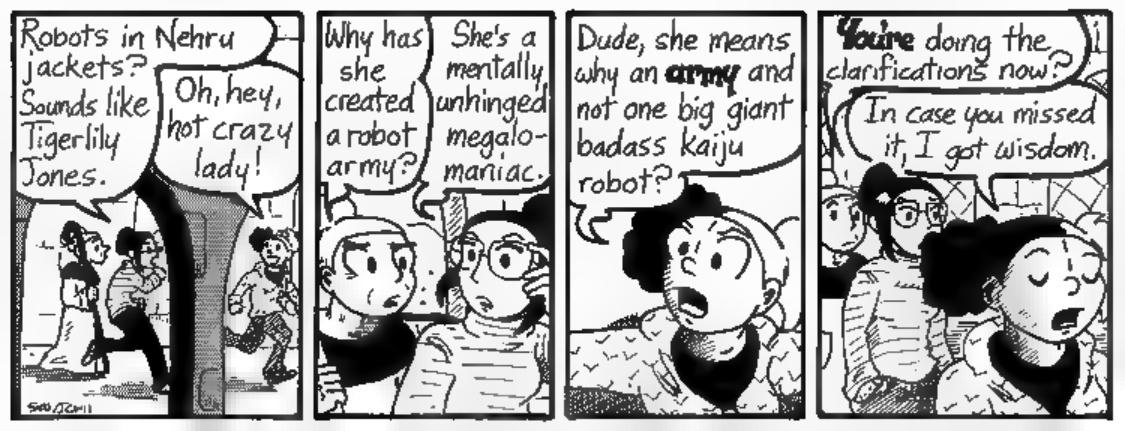

So the secret of the beasts and birds is... everybody's really boring?
Of course!
Boredom is structure. Structure is freedom.
Whoa. Mind expanding now.
Excellent.
Hey, you're wise and stuff. Lemme ask you something.
Do y'alls like barf, or are you just being polite?
Are you kidding? Barf is great!
I know, right?


I can't find any more test animals. The countryside's cleaned out.
Let's ask that farmer.
Excuse us. Do you know where to find any... er.. bats, snakes or coyotes?
Nope.
But I can point you to a couple of yellow-bellied turkeys.
Seriously, you thought that was a farmer?
Farmers can be hip.
Robot army! C'mere!


Prisoners! Out of sight!
Ha!
Fwip
What the hey was that?
That was a missive alerting the monastery.
fwoosh!
The paper dart of a Notary flies unerring for miles!
Neat trick. I'll have to seduce it out of you.
No fair compromising my plans!
I can fold paper too.
ROBOTS! TEQUILA!


...so I says to the beaver, "I got your dam permit here!"
How exciting!
No! It's boring!
Well, it's done. I collected data, and you prepped for your silly imaginary war.
Exactness! A robot army is headed this way!
Intelligence reports that they are "dressed in funky duds."
Fine. Not imaginary. Still silly.


Happy holidays
from the shadow government


Robots in Nehru jackets? Sounds like Tigerlily Jones.
Oh, hey, hot crazy lady!
Why has she created a robot army?
She's a mentally unhinged megalo-maniac.
Dude, she means why an army and not one big giant badass kaiju robot?
Youire doing the clarifications now?
In case you missed it, I got wisdom.


As it happens, the Institute did a "Clockwork Orange" on Dr. Jones.
They conditioned her against building giant robots, but it seems she can manage smaller ones.
How come you know all this?
Where do you think I get my prototypes? The Institute belongs to Anasigma.
Oh. Okay.
That was a dramatic reveal, by the way.
Really? Can I do a "Duhn Duhn DUHHN"?

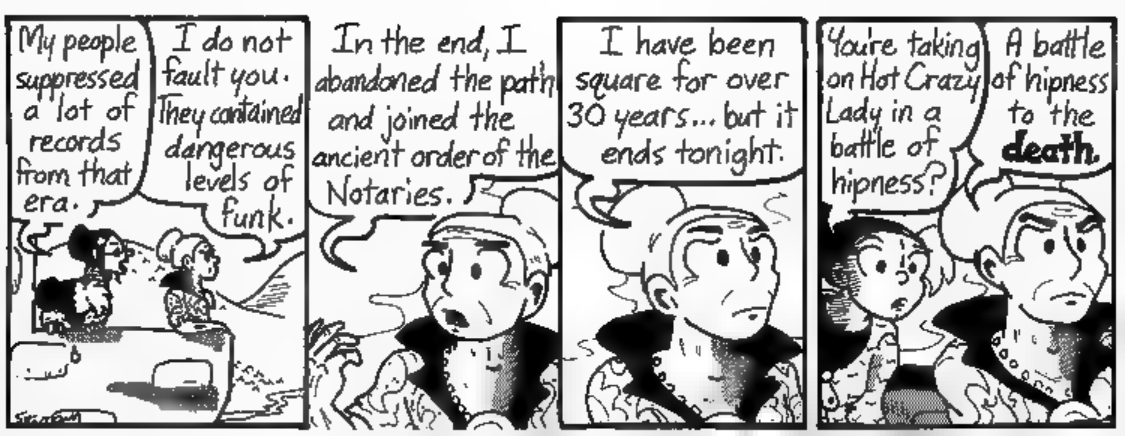

Our hour of need is upon us! You must wield Executor!
Hell yeah, I'm the Chosen!
You must smite our foes with its power!
Hell yeah, I'm your huckleberry!
Ker
You must be kidding me.
Hell yeah, that hurts.

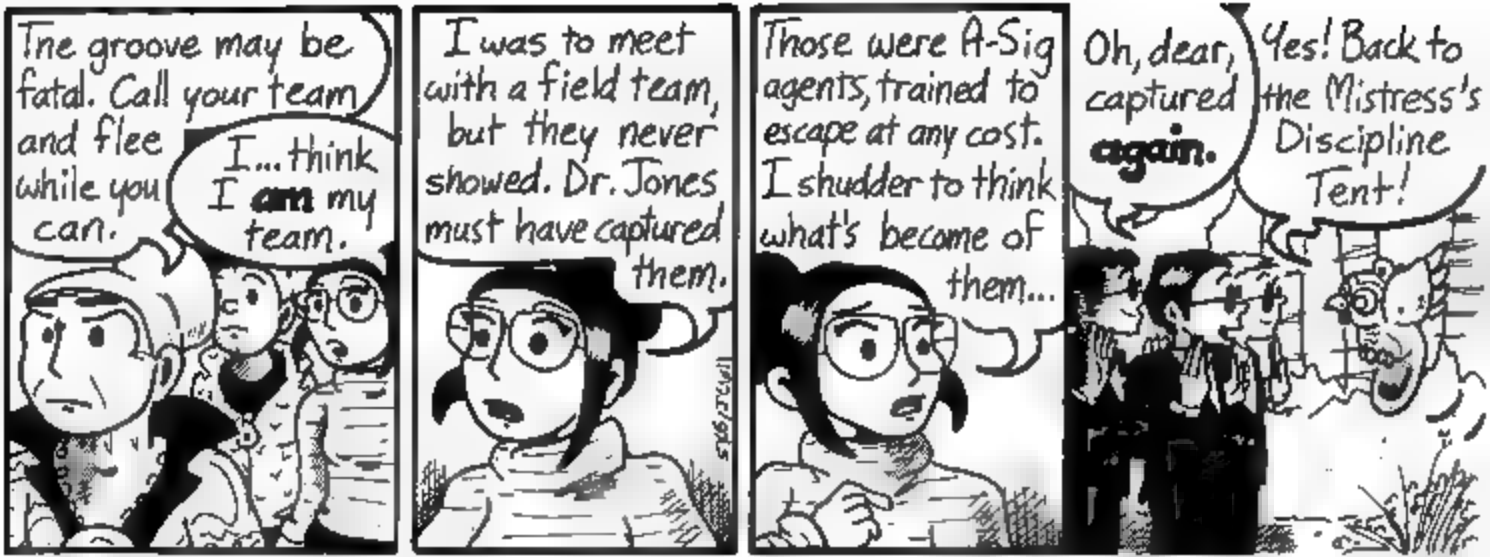

What went wrong? Your plan felt perfect!
Face validity isn't content validity. That's science.
Like most fun things, this is about to end in a robot apocalypse. Let's evacuate.
Never.
We Notaries will defend our keep. You and Unity must leave, as you can aid us no further.
Sooo.. without that one weapon, the brain-eating super-soldier is useless to you.
Y'all mind if I throw a portcullis at dudes?


I've studied Dr. Jones. Your people will be killed out there.
Yeah! Let me help!
Help fight, I mean. Not help kill you.
I am not without my powers. If the Notarial Arts fail...
...I must counter Dr. Jones' groove with my own!
Next time, consider a less delusional mentor.
Can't... look... away...


1972: the golden age of Groove. The Funk flowed freely from the Pyramids.
We understood not the powers we toyed with. In the end, George and Bootsy went where I could not follow.
Excuse me, but you can't mean...
YES! I was a member of Parliament-Funkadelic!
I spent two hours as a fish, and this is too weird for me.
Across the years, the backbeat calls me.




My people suppressed a lot of records from that era.
I do not fault you. They contained dangerous levels of funk.
In the end, I abandoned the path and joined the ancient order of the Notaries.
I have been square for over 30 years... but it ends tonight.
You're taking on Hot Crazy Lady in a battle of hipness?
A battle of hipness to the death.


The groove may be fatal. Call your team and flee while you can.
I... think I am my team.
I was to meet with a field team, but they never showed. Dr. Jones must have captured them.
Those were A-Sig agents, trained to escape at any cost. I shudder to think what's become of them...
Oh, dear, captured again.
Yes! Back to the Mistress's Discipline Tent!


Man, nothing lifts a girl's spirits like some hard discipline.
Lay it down, Mistress.
But on the topic of spirit-lifting, the troops need morale
Dang robots! How come now?
Ain't it enough to be led by a genius who's conceived more universes than they've had hot breakfasts?
We don't eat, Mistress.
Plus I made this righteous pimpstick!


This here is my clockwork pimpstick. I saw the plans in a dream.
To get them, I had to wager all I had against the Devil himself.
I risked my life for this, the only weapon that can beat soul into the Man.
What was the contest?
Jenga, and I whipped his crimson hide.


The troops' present complaint is their uniforms.
What? I spent minutes dreaming those up!
Even so, we have reports of the chrome astrological symbols gumming up their works.
And they don't seem fond of the camel-hair blazers.
What's wrong with the blazers?
Cornbread Flywheel says he looks like a "putz."
If it's good enough for Shaft, it's good enough for my robot army!

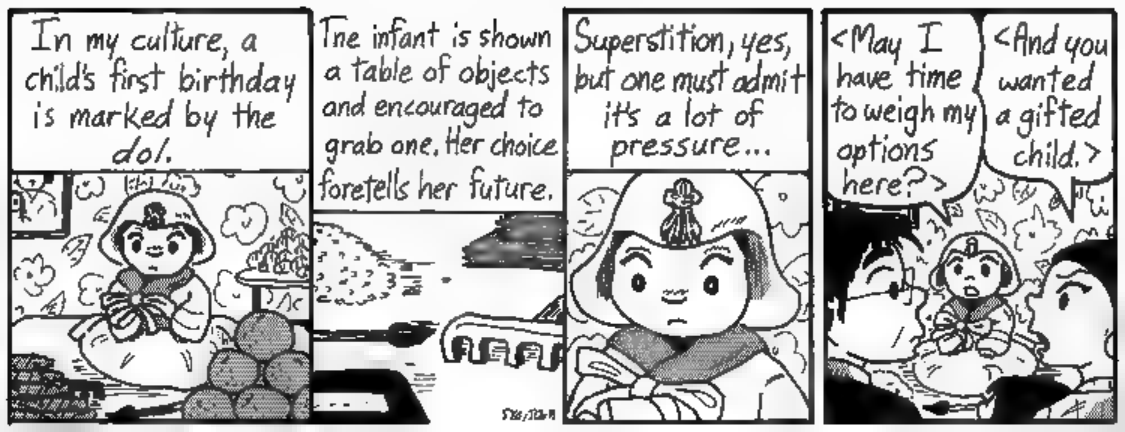

Enough slacking off, robots. Time for WAR!
Not so fast!
Who said that?
I am the chief of the Notaries Public.
And YOU are a child of the '80s who has never known true funk.
Oh, it is so on that it is almost off again.
Mistress, what does that even mean?


SKOLL


Okay, so we get outta here, then I kill you...
what're you doing?
How does this thing work?
I've tested for electrified wires, concealed Van de Graaff generators...
...huge piezo-electric rays and nano-scale microclimates.
Nothing!
There's a test for teeny-tiny rain-clouds?
As long as the Abbess is dressed like that, I'm still the sensible one.


At least you got wisdom here.
Eh, wisdom's overrated. I prefer beatings and snacks.
I guess injecting you into all those animals didn't help you understand humanity.
No...
...but I know what would!
Yipe!
Oh, dear lord, don't start having ideas.
I lied. Wisdom's awesome.


Okay, drain out all the me and set me up for injection again!
Why?
Because we forgot one animal!
We're out of animals!
In this entire fortress, there's nothing left alive but you and...
Erm.
This is gonna be so flippin' rad.


In my culture, a child's first birthday is marked by the dol.
The infant is shown a table of objects and encouraged to grab one. Her choice foretells her future.
Superstition, yes, but one must admit it's a lot of pressure...
<May I have time to weigh my options here?>
<And you wanted a gifted child.>


I may have been the first baby in history to scrub my dol. I couldn't choose.
I always hesitate. Always overthink. Always worry about other people's opinions.
And now, through bizarre circumstance, I'm possessed by an entity who's never thought twice about anything...
Hot damn.


Funkbots! Take this yarddog down!
Pshaw. And you call us the Man.
Yes, delegate to your underlings. So very unhep.
Or perhaps you quaver to face my P-Funk alone?
Not on your life, gran!
Good. Sensual Overdrive and I await you on the Plateau of Neptune.
Damn, that's a fine sword name.
WING!




SYGIL


SUGII




SVGH


SKG 11


SK611





Created By: General Zoi



Created By: General Zo



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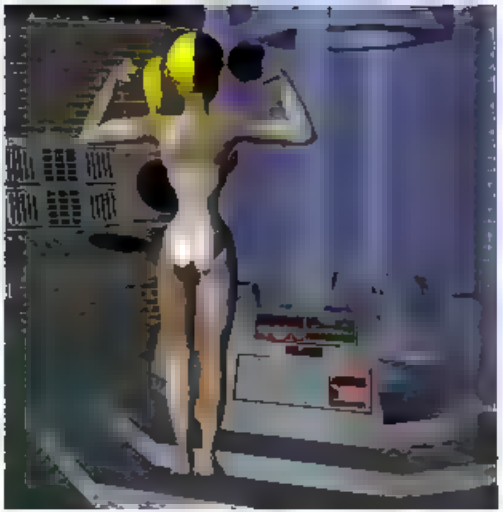

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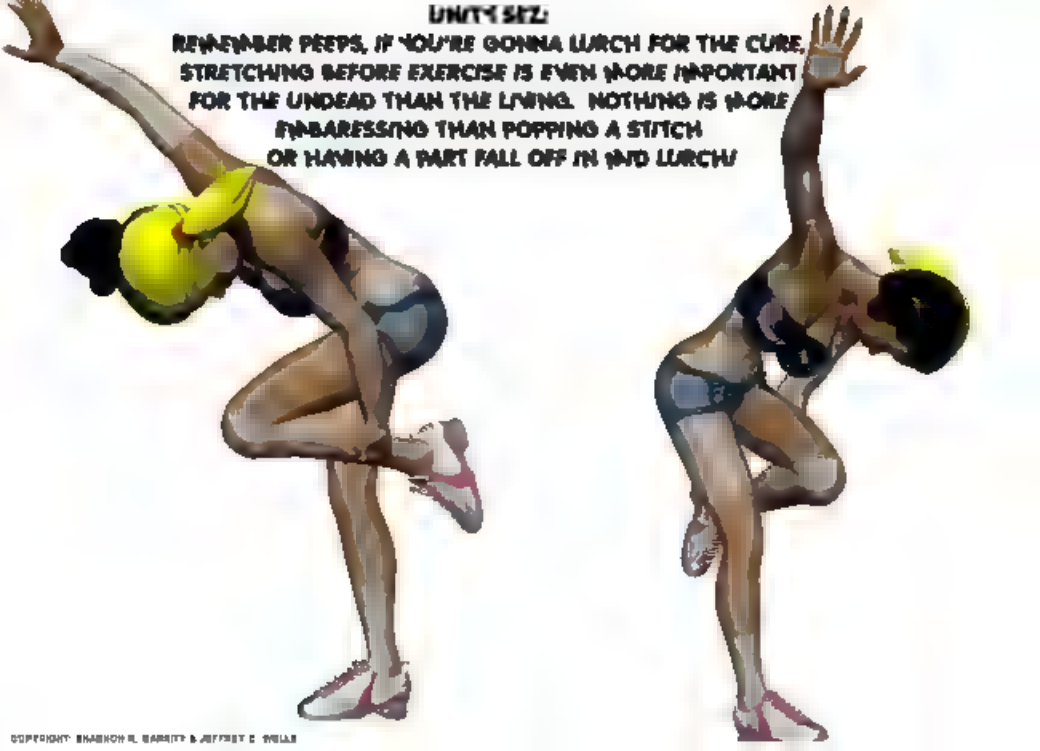
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TECHNICAL STUFF: 'U.N.I.T.Y.' IS DAZ STUDIOS 'VICTORIA' V4.2 WITH THE GIRL MORPH v4.
SORRY ABOUT THE SKIMPY OUTFITS. IT'S HARD FINDING CLOTHES FOR THIS FIGURE THAT WILL MORPH APPROPRIATELY. ALSO, THE HAIR WAS A NIGHTMARE
FOR THOSE WONDERING, THIS FIGURE INCLUDES THE RAJDARGE COMPLETE V4 GENITAL MODEL.
YES SHE'S ANATOMICALLY CORRECT AND BILATERALLY SYMETRICAL.
NO, YOU DON'T GET TO SEE IT. I'M EVIL THAT WAY.



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SIGII


Hugsteimnao
Tipwilkin



